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PARTISAN REVIEW

MAY-JUNE, 1954

PHILIP RAHV
The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor

MALCOLM LOWRY
The Bravest Boat (a story)

ERNST TOPITSCH
The Sociology of Existentialism

ROBERT LOWELL
The Banker's Daughter (a poem)

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The Anti-American Witch Hunt

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PARTISAN REVIEW is published bi-monthly by the Foundation for Cultural Projects, Inc. at 513 Sixth Ave., New York 11, N. Y. Subscriptions: $4 a year, $6.50 for two years, foreign subscriptions, including Canada, $4.50 a year, $7.50 for two years. All payments from foreign countries must be made by U.S. money orders or checks payable in U.S. currency or with $0.75 added for collection charges. Single copy: $0.75. Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes. Copyright May-June, 1954, by PARTISAN REVIEW. Reentered as second-class matter, May 19, 1950, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y. under the act of March 3, 1879.

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Philip Rahv

THE LEGEND OF THE GRAND INQUISITOR*

Until recently Dostoevsky's western interpreters were open to the reproach of making far too little of his Legend of the Grand Inquisitor. The same, however, can hardly be said of his Russian critics, who repeatedly stressed its significance long before the onset of totalitarianism in our time brought on the widespread recognition, if not of the Legend's actual content and meaning, then surely of its close relevance to modern historical experience.

The late Nicolas Berdayev, writing from a philosophical standpoint, maintained that in the Legend Dostoevsky reached the summit of his creation; and some five decades ago V. V. Rozanov, whose insight into Dostoevsky is unsurpassed among Russian commentators, declared it to be of exceptional profundity as a revelation of the structure of human destiny—"terrifying unbelief and the deepest and most ecstatic faith are inconceivably mingled in it." There is some evidence, too, that its author himself thought of it in such terms. In 1902 one witness (V. F. Putzikovitch) published an account of a conversation he had had with the novelist in the summer of 1879, while *The Brothers Karamazov* was still running serially in the *Russky Vestnik,* in which he speaks of the chapter on the Grand Inquisitor as the "culminating point" of his creative career; and when questioned as to his reasons for interpolating a devised legend of sixteenth-century Spain into a narrative of contemporary Russia, his reply was that its theme had haunted him since early youth and for fear that he might not live to complete another major work he had resolved to try his hand at it without delay and incorporate it in the novel he was then engaged in writing.

One need not agree with Berdayev that the Legend of the Grand

* This is a chapter from a longer study of Dostoevsky.

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Inquisitor represents the summit of Dostoevsky's creation in order to make out that as an excursus on the theme of man's historical fate, its terror, despair and absurdity, it is nearly without equal in world literature. It enriches the ideological content of the novel in which it is embedded, enabling us to understand more fully the far-ranging implications of Ivan Karamazov's "rebellion," but it is even more meaningful in terms of Dostoevsky's development as a whole; and the figure of the Grand Inquisitor is dramatically compelling enough to stay permanently in our minds as a symbolic character-image of the dialectic of power. Moreover, the Legend lends itself to analysis, quite apart from its local narrative setting, as a unique essay in the philosophy of history. Deceptively easy on the surface, it is at bottom one of the most difficult texts in the Dostoevskyean canon. By the same token, however, it is also one of the most rewarding. And the difficulty is not in its dramatic form but in the complexity of the ideas, their immense suggestiveness and scope, and the dissonances of belief and emotional discords that sound in them.

But the dramatic form is indispensable to Dostoevsky. That he would have been capable of making substantially the same statement without recourse to the dramatized consciousness of a fictional character is extremely doubtful. For the truth is that this most daring of novelists is apt to decline abruptly to lower levels of performance whenever he puts himself in the position of addressing the reader directly—a stance that rarely suits him, as is shown by the inferior quality of most of the articles included in his *Diary of a Writer*. Now a disjunction of this sort would scarcely surprise us in a novelist deficient in intellectual force and stamina. In Dostoevsky's case, however, the felt disjunction between the qualities of his direct discourse and those emerging through the sustained imaginative projection of his fiction is due, I think, to the fact that when writing in the first person—out in the open so to speak—he at once loses the advantages of complicity. For it is complicity above all which is the secret of his creative triumph over the propagandist in himself. It arises in the process of his identification as novelist with his characters, but it is necessary to distinguish between its genesis and the larger uses to which he puts it. It saves him from the one-sidedness, the fanaticism of commitment, and the casuistry to which as an embattled reactionary ideologue he was all too prone. There is an ambiguity of feeling

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and attitude in him, a tension between sympathies and antipathies, finding its release in this complicity. He fully depends on it in the creation of his characters; and the few from whom he withholds it are reduced to stereotypes, as, for example, Grushenka's Polish suitor and the student-radical Rakitin in *The Brothers Karamazov*. Creatures of their author's political malice, they fall below the level of the world into which he injects them.

Ivan, on the other hand, it has frequently been observed, is the figure in the novel to whom as author he most readily gives himself in the process of identification.[1] This must be taken into account in examining the Legend recounted by Ivan to his brother Alyosha in the course of that prolonged dialogue which is perhaps the most audacious and masterful in the whole of Dostoevsky. Ivan calls the Legend "a poem in prose" that he had not written down but simply made up, as he says, and he tells it to Alyosha in order to support, in a manner at once dramatic and metaphysically provocative, his denial not so much of God as of His creation. The denial consists of a relentless scrutiny of man in general, and particularly Christian man, in the light of what he has made of history and history has made of him.

In his assault on God and the traditional faith Ivan proceeds in a way that transcends the rationalistic argumentation of the old-time atheists. For him it can no longer be a question of attempting to disprove God's existence logically. Ivan is not one to permit his intellectual faculties to linger in the modes of the past. He has made the essentially modern leap from the static framework of analytic thinking to thinking in terms of the historical process. But his leap is made in the typical Russian fashion of that epoch. That is to say, it lands him not in the somewhat placid "historicism" then prevailing in the consciousness of the West but in the eschatological frame of mind common to the Russian intelligentsia of the latter part of the past century. For whatever their outlook, whether revolutionary or not, inclined to nihilism or given to apocalyptic visions, in the main those people tended to see history as verging toward the ultimate and bringing forth a final solution compounded either of pure good

1 My impression is that the identification is more on the intellectual plane than on that of intimate subjectivity. But of course in Dostoevsky ideas are never divorced from feeling; in his critical statements he was wont to link them by inventing such new-fangled terms as "idea-forces" and "idea-feelings." In her memoirs Aimée Dostoevsky recalls the family tradition that her father, in looking back to his youth, "portrayed himself in the person of Ivan."

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or pure evil. "The orientation toward the end," as Berdayev calls it, mastered the most sensitive spirits among them, some predicting the approach of anti-Christ and others fervently awaiting the imminent erection of the City of Man; and in the intensity of their longing for an incontrovertible decision they transform the historical realm into the realm of prophecy and revelation. This is the mood that Ivan's "rebellion" exemplifies to perfection.

His version of atheism is all the more forceful in that it allows for God's existence, if need be, but not for the justifications of His world as revealed progressively *in* and *through* history. Ivan proclaims that no restitution is possible: that the ultimate harmony or reconciliation in the fullness of time could never expiate the suffering of even a single innocent child, let alone efface the innumerable horrors of injustice which humanity has endured through the ages. Hence he refuses God's creation ("returns his entrance ticket") thus proclaiming the right of indifference to the issue of His existence.

Nor does Ivan dispute the ideality and supreme goodness of Christian teaching. On the contrary, it is this very ideality and goodness that he turns into the motive of his dissent from it when he depicts the Grand Inquisitor upbraiding Christ for thinking much too highly of man in endeavoring to augment his freedom of choice between good and evil instead of heeding the counsel of the wise and dread spirit of the wilderness to strip man of his freedom so that he might at long last live in peace and brutish happiness. God, confronted by the radical proofs of the meanness of His world, the senseless suffering prevailing in it and man's congenital inability to enter the promised spiritual kingdom, is disposed of through His works.[2]

But if Ivan does not believe in God, neither does he believe in man. It is true that he loves man—there is no one else left to love and perhaps there has never actually been anyone else. Yet how can he believe in man's freedom in the face of the appalling testimony of history proving his incapacity to achieve it? And in what way

2 Dostoevsky appears to have been inordinately proud of Ivan's subversive intelligence. "Ivan is deep," he wrote in his private notebook; "he is not one of your present-day atheists whose unbelief demonstrates no more than the narrowness of their point of view and the obtuseness of their small minds." And again: "Those thickheads never dreamt of so powerful a negation of God as that embodied in the Inquisitor and in the preceding chapter, to which the entire novel serves as an answer. . . . Even in Europe there have never been atheistical expressions of such power."

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does Ivan envisage the future? If we take the Grand Inquisitor as his *persona,* then he thinks that just as historical Christianity has failed man, so socialism—the Tower of Babel of the coming centuries—will fail him and afterwards the authoritarian theocrats will resume command. And the fault, from first to last, is in man himself because he is an "impotent rebel," a slave even if rebellious by nature. Implicit here is the idea of freedom as the consummation of rebellion and of happiness as the total renunciation of it. The choice is between freedom and happiness. But so long as man is unable to carry his rebellion through to the end or, alternatively, renounce it once and for all, he will attain neither goal. Ivan torments himself with the question of what is to be done with man if you at once love and despise him. The ideology of the Grand Inquisitor, which repudiates freedom for the sake of happiness, is the means he devises for forcing a solution. Yet it also is a means of exposing it. The very manner in which Ivan develops this ideology expresses his loathing of it even as he despairingly accepts it.

This is but another way of saying that in the last analysis he is not really possessed by it, that his mind moves freely in and out of it. The Legend as a whole, in its interplay of drama and ideology, is to be taken, I think, as an experiment, one of those experiments in frightfulness with which modern literature has the deepest affinity. Dostoevsky stands at two removes from the Inquisitor, and Ivan at one remove; and this placing, or aesthetic "distancing," reflects precisely the degree of commitment we are entitled to assume. Therefore to identify Ivan wholly with the Inquisitor, as so many commentators have done, is an error, though a lesser one than that of wholly identifying Dostoevsky with him. The fact is that the Legend has not one but two protagonists, Jesus and the Inquisitor, and that Ivan makes no real choice between them. Jesus is freedom and transcendent truth, whereas the Inquisitor typifies the implacable logic of historical reality; but so stark a confrontation in itself demonstrates that Ivan's dilemma is absolute. After all, he has no God to whom he can appeal for a guaranty of his choice; Jesus is his hero but not his God. Ivan, like his creator, is split through and through, torn between love and contempt, pride and submission, reason and faith, teleology and the extremest pessimism. Inherently a stranger in the world of action, he is capable, however, of apprehending his thought with such urgency

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and fearlessness that it comes almost to resemble an action. And in his rage of love he invokes with prophetic violence a totalitarian elite whose rule is justified by humanity's refusal of Christ's tragic gift of freedom.

The scene of Ivan's "poem in prose" is Seville at the time of the Inquisition. On a day when nearly a hundred heretics had been burnt *ad majorem gloriam Dei* by the cardinal, the Grand Inquisitor, in a splendid *auto da fé,* Christ reappears in His human shape, as He appeared fifteen centuries earlier. The people, recognizing their Savior, welcome Him with cries of love and faith, but at that moment the cardinal—"an old man, almost ninety, tall and erect, with a withered face and sunken eyes, in which there is still a gleam of light"—orders the guards to seize and lead Him away to the dungeon of the Holy Inquisition. At night the door of the cell is suddenly opened and the aged cardinal comes in alone to confront his prisoner. On the morrow, he announces, he will condemn and burn Him at the stake as the worst of heretics: "And the very people who have today kissed Thy feet, tomorrow at the faintest sign from me will rush to heap up the embers of Thy fire." Throughout the long scene that follows Christ is speechless. Only the Inquisitor speaks, and his speech is an astonishingly coherent and complete apology for the total power of man over man. It has grandeur, penetration and enormous audacity—thus would the Inquisitor's counterparts in real life speak if they had candor and were capable of making independent forays into the philosophy of history. The phenomenon of power has always been surrounded by taboos. Power is in some sense the deepest of mysteries, hence taboo, for whatever is behind it is at once holy and unclean. But the Inquisitor breaks all taboos. It was the recommendation of Edmund Burke, that enemy of extremism and of theory, that a "sacred veil" should ever be drawn "over the beginnings of all governments." Now if by "beginnings" we understand the motive-force or inner principle of government, then the Inquisitor is bent on rending asunder the veil that shrouds it and letting us in on its secret. Not that he is not himself a firm believer in the beneficent uses of Burke's "politic, well-wrought veil." He is that above all, but in the séance with his speechless prisoner he is for once intent on putting all things plainly.

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What he puts most plainly to his prisoner is the enormity of the error of rejecting coercion and domination for the sake of man's free love. The three powers with which Satan had tempted Him in the wilderness are miracle, mystery and authority, the sole means of vanquishing the conscience of men forever and holding it captive for their own good. The churchly hierarchy has found it necessary to correct that error and to found its work on those powers. Never has anything truer been said than what was revealed by the wise and dread spirit of the wilderness in the three questions later recorded in the Gospels as "the temptation." For in those questions "the whole subsequent history of mankind is, as it were, brought together into one whole and foretold, and in them are united all the unsolved historical contradictions of human nature. . . ."

Man, hungering both for "earthly bread" and "common worship," and on no account wanting the one without the other, will gladly exchange his freedom for the promise that his double hunger will be appeased. He longs "to find someone quickly to whom he can hand over the gift of freedom with which the ill-fated creature was born"; and he prefers to worship the one who feeds him, the one performing the miracle rejected by Jesus, the miracle of turning stones into bread. Yet man is so constituted that he seeks to worship only that which he believes to be established beyond dispute:

> For those pitiful creatures are concerned not only to find what one or the other can worship, but to find something that all would believe in and worship; what is essential is that all may be *together* in it. This craving for *community* of worship is the chief misery of every man individually and of all humanity from the beginning of time. For the sake of common worship they have slain each other with the sword. They have set up gods and challenged one another, "Put away your gods and come and worship ours, or we will kill you and your gods!" And so it will be to the end of the world, even when gods disappear from the earth; they will fall down before idols just the same.

Jesus' hope that man would cling to God and not crave miracles is futile. Man seeks not so much God as the miraculous, and when deprived of it he creates "new miracles of his own for himself, and will worship deeds of sorcery and witchcraft, though he might be a hundred times over a rebel, heretic and infidel." The Inquisitor foretells that the downfall of the Church will come about exactly through

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such a deed of sorcery and witchcraft when men, declaring that there is no crime and no sin but only hunger, will erect the terrible Tower of Babel. But after a thousand years of suffering, of the confusion of free thought and of science ending in "cannibalism," the people will seek out the priestly elite hidden in their catacombs: "They will find us and cry to us, 'Feed us, for those who have promised the fire from heaven haven't given it!' And then we shall finish building their tower. . . . And we alone shall feed them in Thy name, declaring falsely that it is in Thy name. . . . And we shall sit upon the beast and raise the cup, and on it will be written, 'Mystery.' "

The Inquisitor sneers at the nihilists and socialists even while appropriating what he conceives to be their principal idea: materialism and technics, the miracle of turning stones into bread. In other words, ecclesiastical totalitarianism comes to terms with the socialist cause by absorbing it. Only then begins the reign of the universal state—"an harmonious antheap"—assuring peace for all. Its principle of organization is power. Jesus repudiated power, but not the theocrats of Rome, who have taken up the sword of Caesar, proclaiming themselves the lords of the earth. "We shall triumph and we shall be Caesars," the Inquisitor cries, "and then we shall plan the universal happiness of mankind." All will be happy except the members of the ruling caste, since it is they alone who are not absolved from the knowledge of good and evil. They keep that knowledge strictly to themselves, just as they keep the secret of their atheism. The millions whom they rule submit meekly to their commands and die peacefully believing in the rewards of heaven and eternity, as they have been told to believe, though of course beyond the grave nothing whatever awaits them.

The only answer the Inquisitor receives from his prisoner is a kiss on his withered lips. The old man shudders and, opening the door of the cell, exclaims: "Go, and come no more . . . come not at all, never, never!"

II

The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor did not of a sudden spring full-grown from Dostoevsky's imagination. For its sources, and that peculiar combination in it of elements seldom found in close as-

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sociation, we must look to his intellectual development and political and literary biography.

What is first to be accounted for is the strange amalgam of socialism and Catholicism. The critique of socialism is no more than insinuated in the Legend. Its specifications of time and place are such that socialism can come into it only through oblique references and allusions of an allegoric nature. Thus in the Inquisitor's gloss on the Gospel story of "the temptation" the motif of "stones turned into bread" is brought in again and again so as to convert it into the formula for socialism. The linkage of socialism with the Roman Church, though it may strike western readers as fantastic, is integral to Dostoevsky's thought.

The connection he saw between these two apparently hostile forces actually dates back to the period of the 1840s, when in his youth he belonged to the Petrashevsky circle of intellectual conspirators. Even then, while reading such ideologues as Fourier, Saint-Simon, Proudhon, and Pierre Lerroux, he was still holding fast to the image of Christ and searching for a way of reconciling it with the socialist creed;[3] and he was doubtless influenced by the example of Lamennais, the Catholic priest and social philosopher, the apostle to the poor as he was called, who stood for a kind of theocratic democracy and preached the ideals of the French Revolution. His writings were well known to the members of the Petrashevsky circle, and so were such works as V. Menier's *Jésus Christ devant les conseils de guerre* and Cabet's *Le vrai christianisme suivant Jésus Christ*. Now after Dostoevsky's return from penal servitude in Siberia, as he gradually shed his radical views, he began interpreting the connection he had once seen between the Catholic Church and the socialist movement in a different sense, positing the authoritarian principle as the root-idea of both. To be sure, the animus against Rome is partly explained by the anti-western turn of his thought and his growing inclination to identify Christianity exclusively with the Russian people and their national Church. In the main, however, it was the authoritarian idea of the "compulsory organization of human happiness" that was the essential link in his conception of socialism

3 In this he differed markedly from his fellow-conspirators. Petrashevsky, for instance, once referred to Christ in a private letter as "that notorious demagogue who ended his career somewhat unfortunately."

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and Catholicism as two aspects of the same heretical self-will driving toward the obliteration of human dignity and freedom of conscience. In *The Diary of a Writer* as in his private notebooks he predicted time and again that the Catholics, deserting the "earthly potentates" with whom they had been allied in the past, would inevitably join forces with the socialists. At other times he varied the prediction (and this is the variant given in the Legend) by saying that socialism would fail and that thereafter the Catholic hierarchy would adopt the socialist dogma of "earthly bread" and by uniting it with its own dogma of "common worship" forge an ideological instrument for the conquest of the universal power it had always striven for. And if we go further back into Dostoevsky's fiction we learn that in *The Idiot* (1868) he was already experimenting with the notions that more than ten years later found their definitive form in the Legend. Thus Myshkin, in a ranting monologue, denounces Catholicism as an unchristian religion that preaching a "distorted Christ" is "even worse than atheism itself." "The Pope," he cries, "seized the earth . . . and grasped the sword. . . . How could atheism fail to come from them?" And socialism also comes "from despair in opposition to Catholicism on the moral side, to replace the lost moral power of religion . . . and to save humanity not by Christ but by violence. . . ."

The critique of socialism in the Legend has its source, too, in a crucial experience of Dostoevsky's youth. This was his relationship with Belinsky, the great radical critic and one of the most dominant and fascinating figures in Russian cultural history, who intervened decisively in Dostoevsky's early career by his laudatory appraisal of his first novel, *Poor Folk*. It can be shown that a key passage in the Inquisitor's speech is a direct transposition of arguments to which Belinsky had recourse in the passionate debates of that early period. Many years later, in a reminiscence entitled "Old People" (*The Diary of a Writer, 1873*), the intrinsic significance of which exceeds any interest we may have in it from the standpoint of provenience in the narrow sense, Dostoevsky summed up what was at stake for him in those debates by recollecting certain scenes involving Belinsky that had long haunted his mind; and the piece as a whole, with its marvelously vivid portrait of the radical critic, suggests, as no purely conceptual formulation could ever do, the agitation of soul and the importunity and immediacy with which those people grasped ideas,

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striving with might and main not so much to master them for their own sake as to extract from them at all costs a meaning or a truth that would dispel the darkness in which men live and redeem their suffering. "Old People" is in fact a little masterpiece that, in its recovery of the past, recalls us to the very origins of Dostoevsky's complex of ideas. It discloses, if not the personal, then at least the intellectual conditions under which he formed some of his powerful obsessions, as, for instance, the obsession with the personality of Christ to which he at all times yielded even at the expense of Christianity itself.

"Dost Thou know that ages will pass, and humanity will proclaim by the lips of their sages that there is no crime, and therefore no sin; there is only hunger. 'Feed men, and then ask of them virtue!' that's what they'll write on their banner, which they will raise against Thee." Thus begins the passage in the Legend directly echoing Belinsky's thought. It is by no means the only passage of its kind, as the account given in "Old People" sufficiently makes clear.[4]

Belinsky was not primarily a reflective person. He was above all an enthusiast, always and throughout his life. My first novel, *Poor Folk,* delighted him . . . but then, from the first days of our acquaintance, he threw himself with the most simple-hearted haste into the task of converting me to his creed. . . . I found him to be a passionate socialist, but it was his atheism rather that he at once began urging upon me. There is much that is noteworthy in that, for it reveals his astonishing intuition and extraordinary ability to sound an idea to its very depth. Some two years ago the International began one of its manifestoes with the significant declaration: "We are first of all a society of atheists," that is to say, it began with the essence of the matter. Likewise Belinsky. Valuing above all reason, science, and realism, he nevertheless understood better than anyone else that by themselves reason, science, and realism could produce an antheap but not the social "harmony" in which a human being would be able to dispose of his life properly. He knew that the moral principle is at the root of everything. As for the new moral principle of socialism . . . he believed in it fervently and without reflection; in this respect there was nothing but enthusiasm in his approach. But as a socialist, knowing as he did that the revolution

4 The translation is by the present writer. I have found the English version of *The Diary of a Writer,* brought out in this country in 1949, to be virtually unusable, inept in point of style and frequently far from accurate in rendering the plain meaning of the text.

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must positively begin with atheism, it was his duty first of all to depose Christianity—the religion from which emerged the moral principles of the society he negated. And he radically negated the family, property, the moral responsibility of the individual. (I might add that, like Herzen, he was himself a good husband and a good father.) No doubt he understood that in denying the moral responsibility of man he was depriving him of his freedom; yet at the same time he believed with his whole being that socialism not only does not wipe out the freedom of the individual but, on the contrary, that it actually raises it to unheard-of grandeur, establishing it on adamantine foundations.

All that remained then, was the glowing personality of Christ, with which it was most difficult to cope. As a socialist Belinsky was in duty bound to subvert the teaching of Christ, terming it a mendacious and ignorant idolatry of man, condemned by contemporary science and the principles of political economy. However, there still remained the luminous image of the Son of God, His ethical inaccessibility, His wondrous and miraculous beauty. Belinsky, in his constant, unquenchable enthusiasm, would not be stopped even by this insuperable barrier, as Renan was stopped, who, in his book *Vie de Jésus,* full of unbelief, none the less declared that Christ is the ideal of human beauty, an inaccessible type which humanity can never be expected to bring forth again.

"Do you know?" Belinsky screamed at me one evening (he was always screaming as he got excited). "Do you know that it is not ethical to heap sins upon man and to put him under all sorts of obligations, when society is so badly organized that man cannot help doing evil, since he is economically led to wickedness (*ekonomichesky priveden k zlodeistvu*). It is inept and cruel to demand of man that which he cannot fulfill according to the laws of his nature, even if he wished to do so."

That evening we were not alone. A friend of Belinsky's was present, a person whom he greatly esteemed and listened to with attention.

"It hurts me to look at him," Belinsky suddenly interrupted his vehement discourse, pointing toward me. "Every time I mention Christ his face changes so, falling to pieces as if he were about to cry. Yes, believe me, simple-hearted man that you are," and here again he threw himself at me, "believe me that that Christ of yours, had he been born in our time, would be the most ordinary, inconsequential person; he would have to efface himself in the presence of contemporary science and leaders of humanity."

"Well, not quite," Belinsky's friend intervened. (I remember that we were sitting down while Belinsky was racing up and down the room.) "Well, no. If Christ were to appear now he would surely join the movement and become its head. . . ."

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"Yes, that's it," Belinsky agreed with surprising alacrity. "He would follow the socialists and certainly join them."

"Feed men, and then ask of them virtue!" is the Inquisitor's blunt way of stating Belinsky's protest against the demands made on abused and hungry men in the name of the Christian ethic.[5] Dostoevsky, ignoring with typical guile the concrete political meaning of this protest, which lay in the struggle against arbitrary power and oppressive institutions, transposed the issue to the philosophical plane and applied himself to disclosing the implications of unfreedom and refusal of moral responsibility in his antagonist's position. He continued his quarrel with Belinsky through the years; but the particular formulation of "stones turned into bread" he first hit upon in the May 1776 issue of *The Diary of a Writer,* where he analyzed the case of a young girl by the name of Pisareva who had committed suicide and whose letter taking leave of her friends had been printed in the newspapers. Pisareva, the daughter of formerly well-to-do landowners, came to Petersburg, as Dostoevsky put it in his article, "to pay her respects to progress and become a midwife . . . but not finding enough significance in earthly medicine and undergoing moral fatigue took her life." He seized upon a part of her letter containing very precise instructions as to the disposal of her petty savings to preach a sermon on the materialistic leanings of the younger generation. "The importance attached to money is perhaps the last echo of the chief prejudice of her life, that of 'stones turned into bread.' In short, here we come upon the leading conviction that if all were economically secure all would be happy and if there were no poor people there would be no crime. There is no such thing as crime. It is a morbid state, induced by poverty and unfortunate circumstances, etc., etc. This comprises the small, conventional, terribly characteristic and ultimate catechism with which they enter life . . . a catechism which they substitute for the living life, for bonds with the soil, faith in the truth, everything, everything." Thereupon the musician V. V. Alexyev wrote to Dostoevsky to inquire about his quotation from the Gospels, the phrase "stones turned into bread." To this query from a reader he replied at length, explaining the import of "bread and stones" in

5 This is of course a recurrent theme of all radical literature, e.g., Bertolt Brecht's famous line in the *Dreigroschen Oper*: *Erst kommt das Fressen, dann kommt die Moral.*

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terms of the social pathos of the age and outlining in some detail the main ideological theme of the Legend, which he did not actually write till three years later, in 1879.

The letter to Alexyev contains the ideas of the Legend but no hint of its plot. And of this plot of Christ's return to earth and His encounter with the Inquisitor it should be said that it is not quite so original as it appears at first sight, far less so in fact than the ideological content of the Legend. The return of Christ is a theme touched upon in one way or another by not a few writers whose work Dostoevsky knew well, among them Voltaire, Goethe, Jean-Paul Richter, Balzac, Hugo and Vigny. Here we can only indicate two possible sources that are of particular interest and that Russian scholars have remarked upon. The first is Jean-Paul's fantastic story "A Dream," in which an atheist gives an account of finding himself in a cemetery at midnight and overhearing a colloquy between Jesus and the dead. The dead ask Him whether God exists and He replies that He had sought God in vain and that everywhere He had come upon nothing but emptiness. Then children rise from their graves and ask: "Jesus, are we really without a father?" "Yes," is the answer, "we are all orphans." The second source is Victor Hugo's poem *Le Christ au Vatican,* an anti-clerical pamphlet published in Geneva in 1864. (Dostoevsky, an assiduous reader of Hugo, wrote a preface to the Russian translation of *Notre Dame de Paris.*) In this poem Christ, fearing that men had forgotten his message, resolves to return to earth in His human shape. (*Dépouillons, il le faut, ma divine nature/ Prenons l'habit modeste et l'humaine figure/ Que j'avais en Judée. . . .*). He appears in Rome but is denied access to the Pope. In a conversation with some officials of the Vatican, among them a cardinal, he learns that the popes have long ago assumed the role of Caesar and that *La sainteté a d'autres choses à faire/ Que de penser au Christ, au ciel, au breviaire.* Christ's retort to this startling news is rendered in the last stanza of the poem:

Le cardinal parlait encore
Que Jésus Christ comme sur le Thabor
S'etait transfiguré. Dans son regard austère
S'allumaient les éclairs de la sainte colère
Qui l'anima lorsque jadis
Il chassa les vendeurs loin du sacré parvis.

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Hugo's Christ responds angrily to the cardinal's tale of betrayal, and this must have struck Dostoevsky as an egregious error on the part of the French poet, a symptom no doubt of the pride and self-will ruling the West. In his own version Christ kisses the cardinal and departs quietly—a meek exit entirely in keeping with Dostoevsky's conception of Russian Christianity.

III

But if Dostoevsky's Christ is so very Russian in his meekness, his Inquisitor is no less Russian in his cruelty. Though appearing in the role of a Catholic hierarch, he is in fact quite as Byzantine as he is Roman, if not more so. However considerable the part he has played in the history of the West, in Russian history he gained even greater ascendancy. From Ivan the Terrible to Stalin he has always known how to apply cruelty, violence and deception, as well as how to make use of doctrine and dogma, in order to subjugate the people, depriving them of all rights but one—the right to practice the Christian virtue of meekness; and to this day that virtue is still widely practiced in Russia, though to call it a Christian virtue has now been forbidden. Why call it meekness when there are other words for it, such as obedience and discipline? In the Kremlin's new ideological Empire the traditional Christian idiom has been replaced by the language of Communism. But the sway of the Grand Inquisitor is greater than ever.[6]

6 The specter of Communism that a century ago Marx saw haunting Europe is scarcely to be distinguished any longer from the specter of Dostoevsky's Inquisitor, who now haunts not only Europe but the entire world. And his presence is to be detected in nearly all the grisly representations of the future attempted by contemporary writers.

Thus in George Orwell's *1984*, a novel about the unfuture of the future, the words and purposes of the Grand Inquisitor are obsessively recalled, as in the torture-scene showing how Winston Smith, the hero, is broken by the Ingsoc Commissar, O'Brien, even as he initiates him into the secrets of power. Smith thinks that he will please O'Brien by reproducing the Inquisitor's idea in explanation of the Party's drive for limitless power: "That the Party did not seek power for its own ends, but only for the good of the majority. . . . That the choice for mankind lay between freedom and happiness, and that, for the great bulk of mankind, happiness was better. That the Party was the eternal guardian of the weak, a dedicated sect doing evil that good might come. . . ." But O'Brien, going beyond even this last and most insidious rationalization of power, forcibly teaches Smith the plain truth that "the Party (*Footnote continued on p.* 264)

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The historian Kliuchevsky once summed up Russian history in a single sentence: "The state thrives while the people grow sickly." It is this brutalizing national experience which makes for the compelling force of the Legend and is by far the deeper explanation of it. Whatever Dostoevsky's manifest intention, actually it is one of the most revolutionary and devastating critiques of power and authority ever produced. What it comes to in the end is a total rejection of Caesar's realm, a rejection of power in all its forms, in its actuality as in its rationalizations; and it exposes above all the fatal effect of power on such ideals and aspirations of humanity as are embodied in the original Christian teaching. Clearly, then, the Legend cuts under Dostoevsky's persistent efforts to present Eastern Orthodoxy as a viable alternative to the Orthodoxy of the West; the czars, autocrats of Church and State alike, were after all quite as grand as any Roman Pontiff in their inquisitorial absolutism. Hence it can be said, on this ground and other grounds too, that the implications of the Legend belie the "official" national-religious thesis of the novel as a whole.

For implicit in the Legend is another thesis altogether, that of Russian Christian anarchism. And apart from the Legend there are many intimations of this latent thesis in the novel. It almost emerges to the surface in chapter 5 of Book II, where Ivan, beginning with an exposition of the ideas in his article on the ecclesiastical courts, ends up by advocating the dissolution of all "earthly states" and their absorption into a Church that has in truth abjured "every purpose incongruous with its aims as a Church." To this sketch of a religious Utopia Father Zossima assents, if anything going even further than Ivan, while Father Paissy cries: "So be it, so be it!" One must know how to read the Aesopian language of this singular dialogue, with

(*Footnote continued from p.* 263) seeks power for its own sake. . . . Power is not a means; it is an end. . . . The object of power is power. Now do you understand me?" Orwell's "correction" of Dostoevsky is acceptable in terms of strict realism, but it seems to me to fail psychologically. As I wrote, if I may be permitted to quote myself, in a review of *1984* (PR, July 1949): "Undoubtedly it is O'Brien, rather than the Grand Inquisitor, who reveals the real nature of total power; yet that does not settle the question of O'Brien's personal psychology, the question, that is, of his ability to live with this naked truth as his sole support; nor is it conceivable that the party-elite to which he belongs could live with this truth for very long. Evil, far more than good, is in need of the pseudo-religious justifications so readily provided by the ideologies of world-salvation and compulsory happiness. Power is its own end, to be sure, but even the Grand Inquisitors are compelled, now as always, to believe in the fiction that their power is a means to some other end, gratifyingly noble and supernal."

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its undertones, political hints and ideological anecdotes cunningly introduced at strategic moments and then deliberately cut short before their full intent is disclosed. One such anecdote, for example, is related by the liberal Miüsov, whose very liberalism serves here as a screen behind which the author can have his say without too obviously compromising himself. Miüsov tells of meeting a Frenchman in Paris, an influential personage in the Government, who confides in him that "we are not particularly afraid of all those socialists, anarchists, infidels and revolutionists. . . . But there are a few peculiar men among them who believe in God and are Christians, but at the same time are socialists. These are the people we are most afraid of. . . . The socialist who is a Christian is more to be dreaded than a socialist who is an atheist." In the given context this comes through as virtually a confession on Dostoevsky's part. The crypto-anarchist or socialist element in the novel was not noticed, to be sure, by Dostoevsky's reactionary mentors, such as Pobedonostsev for instance,[7] who lauded him for showing up the disrupters of the imperial authority without suspecting that he himself—or was it his double?—was inextricably involved with them. Merezhkovsky was essentially right, I think, in the claim he once made that the author of *The Brothers Karamazov,* though fearful of speaking out, was at bottom a religious revolutionist.

The Russian intelligentsia of the nineteenth century was deeply antagonistic to State and Empire. It produced all sorts of libertarian ideas, secular and religious, which, while related to Western influences, at the same time reflect the elemental hatred of authority prevailing among the peasant-masses, a hatred sometimes taking the form of blind anarchic revolt but more often that of meek submission; yet the submission has something about it so flagrant, a perfection of abjectness as it were, which is in itself a kind of challenge and provocation. It goes without saying that Dostoevsky was thoroughly infected with such feelings, and that their ambivalence suited his psychological make-up. And, in speaking of this anarchism, what is

7 Pobedonostsev, at that time Procurator of the Holy Synod and tutor of the Crown Prince, was an out-and-out reactionary authoritarian bearing in his role and personality a rather strong family-likeness to the Grand Inquisitor: so much so in fact that some Russian critics (e.g., Georgi Chulkov in *Kak rabotal Dostoevski*) have speculated on the possibility of Dostoevsky actually having had him in mind as a model even while enjoying his patronage and writing him letters of fulsome flattery.

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meant by it is nothing like a theoretically worked-out doctrine, as that of Bakunin or Kropotkin; he was hardly able to distinguish between anarchism and socialism. The one emphatic distinction he did make was between believing and unbelieving rebels; and if he was an opponent of the socialists it was, on the conscious level at any rate, because of their atheism, which he struggled to suppress in himself, and the totalitarian potential he discerned in their designs. Inevitably his religious anarchism brings to mind the anarchism of Tolstoy, and in this respect it is instructive to compare the two novelists. Dostoevsky's anarchism is fully as Utopian as that of Tolstoy but with these important differences: it is latent rather than manifest in his work and it is mystical rather than rational in conception; its political aims are ill-defined and ambiguous; intrinsically it is more the expression of an apocalyptic mood than of a radical will to revolution as a practical enterprise. The notion of a "free theocracy" expounded by Ivan is a contradiction in terms—a system of government by priests is scarcely the medium in which freedom might be expected to flourish. But if it is a contradiction, it is exactly of the type, holding in balance his conflicting impulses toward rebellion and submission, to which Dostoevsky was always irresistibly drawn.

In the late 1870s, the period of the composition of *The Brothers Karamazov,* his exasperation grew as he watched the continuing attraction of Russian youth to subversive doctrines. He felt the need to provide some kind of alternative to those godless doctrines, and one surmises that that was the motive for his advancing, even if tentatively, the idea of the regeneration of society through the rise of a "free theocracy." This idea, however, is so vaguely related to the real forces at work in Russian society, so Utopian in essence, as to suggest its makeshift character as a hastily mounted countermove, from the position of religious radicalism, to the atheistical radicalism of his opponents among the intellectuals. On a deeper level, and without abandoning in any way his faith in the Russian Christ, he yet reacted to the signs of disintegration all around him by becoming more and more skeptical of man's capacity for salvation and the meaningfulness of his history. Thus he came to fear that the weakness of men would eventually bring on a successful attempt to organize their happiness by compulsion. This theme was not new to him. He had dealt with it before, in *Notes from Underground* and in *The Possessed.*

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It is interesting to compare his earlier and later handling of this theme of "the compulsory organization of human happiness." Let us begin, then, by putting the Grand Inquisitor into relation with another and quite as famous protagonist of Dostoevsky's, the hero-narrator of *Notes from Underground*. It is for the content of their thought that they are worth comparing, and not primarily as novelistic creations. The aged cardinal of Seville, lacking the dimension of subjectivity so conspicuous in the underground man, is not a character in the proper sense of the term but simply the personification of a *Weltanschauung*—that of Ivan Karamazov in its most heretical and negative aspects. The undergroundling, on the other hand, is very far from being merely the embodiment of an idea. Still, in linking him with the Inquisitor, our concern is not with the undergroundling's prostrate personality, with his nausea of consciousness and enjoyment of his own degradation, but rather with the theory of human nature he propounds, a theory in which the bold affirmation of freedom is combined with the equally bold negation of "reason, progress and enlightenment."

What this theory has in common with that of the Inquisitor is that both are centered on the question of freedom. Where they differ is in their answers to this question, the undergroundling's answer being as positive as the Inquisitor's is negative. Hence the contrast between the two theories gives us the measure of the growth and change of Dostoevsky's thought between the early 1860s, when he wrote *Notes from Underground,* and the period of his last and greatest novel. The earlier work is written from the perspective of the isolated and perversely recalcitrant individual, who, in his "moral obliquity," will never consent to join the "universal and happy antheap" projected by the ideologues of rational self-interest and progress toward an harmonious society. Through the figure of this unconsoled and unconsolable individual Dostoevsky pointed to the chaos and irrationality of human nature, thus mocking the utilitarian formulas of the radicals and liberals. "Man everywhere and at all times . . . has preferred to act as he chose and not in the least as his reason and advantage dictated. . . . One's own unfettered choice, one's own caprice . . . is that very 'most advantageous advantage' . . . against which all systems and theories are shattered to atoms. . . . What man wants is simply *independent* choice, whatever that independence may

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cost and wherever it may lead." He readily admits that man "likes to make roads and to create," but this admission goes with the emphatic reminder that man also loves chaos and destruction. He is therefore convinced that the organization of a rational society—which, in his view, cannot but turn out to be a human antheap—will prove forever impossible.

Now this is a vision entirely at variance with that of the Inquisitor, whose idea it is that "independent choice" is exactly what men fear most; that is the source both of his contempt for them and his paradoxical determination to strip them of the useless gift of free choice so as to convert them into the childishly happy and ignorant members of a totalitarian collective. He proclaims the failure of historical Christianity to illuminate and sanctify human existence, but this failure he imputes not to the Church but to the falsity of Christ's message in the light of the proven inadequacy of human nature. Consequently the Church can have no function but that of an instrument of power in the hands of an elite that has taken up the sword of Caesar. Since man is feebler and baser than Christ believed him to be, it was senseless to bring him the gift of freedom. The weak soul is unable to benefit from such heady gifts. The Inquisitor is not a psychologist pure and simple, like the undergroundling. In his thought psychological insights are supported by historical facts. Another difference is that the primary object of his polemic is what he takes to be the illusion of human freedom, whereas the undergroundling makes reason the target of his devaluating analysis.

When it came to writing *The Brothers Karamazov* Dostoevsky had wholly surmounted the standpoint of defiant and obdurate individualism exhibited in *Notes from Underground*. He then thought that the Palace of Crystal (at that time his prime symbol of socialism, superseded later by the Tower of Babel, a more cheerless symbol) would never be built because men were too independent to permit its construction. This type of individualism, however, with its stress on the unfettered human will and the inexhaustible intransigence of self-pride, is not really consonant with the religious valuation of life. It is, in fact, a secular type of individualism which can be turned quite as effectively against Christian philosophies as against the philosophy of social progress; the recalcitrant individual may after all refuse to choose Christ in the same "irrational" way as he refuses

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to submit to the dictates of reason and self-interest. "Moral obliquity" provides as insecure a foundation for the Kingdom of God as for the Kingdom of Man. It is only in later years, as his religious consciousness became fully engaged in his creative effort, that Dostoevsky developed a new idea of freedom, based not on "moral obliquity" but on Christian love and the unviolated conscience.

Also, it is important to note that so far as socialism is concerned it is mainly the conception of it dramatized in *The Possessed* which is epitomized in the Legend, and that, in a sense, the figure of the Inquisitor also derives from that novel, being an elaborated and historically enriched variant of the sketchy figure of Shigalov. It will be remembered that Shigalov, an eccentric ideologue, comes to the conclusion that unlimited freedom can be attained only through unlimited despotism, or, rather, that the extremes of freedom and despotism are in reality identical. Accordingly he proposes, as no less than "a final solution of the social question," that mankind be divided into two unequal parts, one-tenth enjoying "absolute liberty and unbounded power over the other nine-tenths. The others have given up all individuality and become, so to speak, a herd, and, through boundless submission, will by a series of regenerations achieve primeval innocence, something like the Garden of Eden. They'll have to work, however." The society envisaged by the Inquisitor is plainly a later edition of Shigalov's herd, and the latter's elite is even further reduced in numbers by the Inquisitor: "There will be thousands of millions of happy babes, and a hundred thousand sufferers who have taken upon themselves the curse of the knowledge of good and evil." The reign of the "sufferers" will be cruel, of course, for they believe that their cruelty will guarantee the happiness of the rest of mankind. Moreover, as Albert Camus has remarked, they excuse their cruelty by claiming, like the Satan of the Romantics, that it will be hard for them to bear.

Yet there is no denying that even this mordant reading of the historical past and future did not deter Dostoevsky from asserting his belief that freedom of choice in the knowledge of good and evil is the essence of man's humanity and the essence of Christ's teaching. The kind of faith or obedience that is bought with bread is evil, and so is any constraint on man's conscience, in whatever form, even if the constraint is exercised for ostensibly good ends. Freedom is not

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to be confounded with goodness or happiness. Goodness festers if bred by constraint, and happiness turns into brutish contentment. Only when freely chosen do they acquire a human content. This is precisely what makes Dostoevsky a novelist of tragic freedom, his perception that genuine freedom, being open to the choice between good and evil, is unthinkable without suffering. That is the price of freedom, and he who refuses to pay it can only dream of freedom without experiencing it, without substantiating it within the actual process of living. It is a conception which on one side of it is close to existentialist thought. For Dostoevsky, as for the existentialists, it is above all through the experience of choice and decision, resolutely entered upon, that the individual comes to self-realization. But this grasp and possession of one's own being, which is the human creature's truest rapture, is at the same time inescapably associated with anxiety and suffering, and for this reason men are continually driven to shirk meaningful choices. However, the difference between some of the latter-day existentialists and Dostoevsky is that for him the act of choosing is wholly a moral if not always a religious act while for them it is an act unconditionally open to existence in all its sheerness and totality, not limited to any single sphere, ethical or otherwise.

Now in the Legend Dostoevsky so represents the truth of history—that is, the truth not of what ought to be but of what is and has been—that we see it as patently belonging to the Inquisitor, not to Christ. Dostoevsky none the less takes his stand with Christ. This should not surprise us; if we consider his biography in its temporal depth, so to speak, we find that he committed himself very early to this clinging to Christ in the face of all the malignant realities of history and man's nature. More than twenty-five years before composing the Legend he wrote in a letter from his place of exile in Siberia that if it were proven to him that Christ is "outside the truth, and if the truth really did exclude Christ, I should prefer to stay with Christ and not with the truth."

This paradoxical attitude is not to be taken as mere sentiment. It has its consequences. In the context of the Legend it means that if Dostoevsky rejects the wisdom of the Inquisitor, it is solely in the terms of the desperate paradox of his faith in Christ. Otherwise he apparently neither doubts nor denies that malign wisdom. What is to be observed, too, is that he thus indirectly fulfills his ideological

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aim of excluding any middle ground between Christ and the Grand Inquisitor. And the starkness and ultimatism of the choice he offers, which has the effect of shrinking our sense of historical possibilities and reducing our resourcefulness in the face of extremes, reminds us of other great thinkers of the nineteenth century, like Kierkegaard and Marx, who likewise made war, though from other standpoints, on that century's liberal humanism—Kierkegaard with his either-or formula that is spiritually quite as terroristic as that of the Russian novelist, and Marx with his inexorable idea that if humanity fails to choose socialism it will inevitably fall back into barbarism.

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Robert Lowell

THE BANKER'S DAUGHTER

(*Marie de Medici, shortly after the assassination of Henri IV, her husband*)

•

My humorous Tuscan otherworldliness
And Hapsburg lewdness triumphed less and less
In this provincial capital at first;
Now the Woman of Fortune's reimbursed,
And I am queen. I'll need the Spaniard's pride,
Who never laughs, an armadillo's hide,
Gizzard and legs of ostrich— God knows what—
To stomach Paris. Blowing cold and hot,
I'll work the bellows . . . Guise and Huguenot,
Bishop and Bible, counterplot and plot,
Gunpowder blown from England, Holland, Spain,
The Pope, Geneva . . . I am queen. I reign.
Round as a cannon? Banker? *L'Etrangère?*
The French detest me? Figs! I breed. I bear
Blood-royal blossoms from their sterile stock—
Like Moses, I strike water from the rock.
Why chew the carpet, couple with revolt,
When giddy Henry slips the marriage bolt
And sleeps in single lodgings on the town—
I was the bedding for his hollow crown.
I played the man? No, no! Perish the day!
Once this poor country egg from Florence lay
At her accouchement, such a virtuous ton
Of woman, only women thought her one—
King Henry pirouetted on his heel
And jested, "Look, my cow's producing veal."

Paris finds Henry worth a Mass— Amen!
Good wives must follow her example then,
O Bourbon, when the Belle of Paris rings
Her golden changes on the heart of kings.

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E ammazzato! God will hold the crown.
Hold Paris, Lord. Save each remoter town,
O bring my master gilded lilies torn
From Mary's bosom; he has felt the thorn.
They come, they come: the Virgin bucking rams,
The Faggot Maid, the wolf who suckles lambs.
While hosts of Vergils hymned the golden year,
Ravaillac's dagger struck the royal steer.
Ring, ring, tired bells, the King of France is dead.
Who'll give the lover of the land a bed?
My Bull of Bashan! Shall I make you leave
Your carnal genuflections to receive
Unforced confessions? Sire, I serve and mind
And suffer here, so far from humankind,
You must not question how your servants die,
Nor curse the gods, if for a moment I
Abandon protocol to hold your fort,
Till reinvestment by the king and court . . .
O cozy scuffles, soft obscenities,
Wardrobes that dragged exchequers to my knees,
Cables of pearls, and crazy lutes strung tight—
O tension, nerve and backbone, Sire! And night
Remembers how your queen embroidered lies
That stripped the royal purse. I said your eyes
Flew kiting to my dormer from the blue.
I was a sparrow. You were fifty-two.

And now the Dauphin! Sterile, small and dry,
Is he the apple of a mother's eye?
Look, the hazed monarch hobbles home from school:
I fold his pillow, plop him on a stool.
Will prattle dearer to me than my own
Deafen the Queen's dictation from the throne?
I speak in season. Nor am I released
From motherhood, and free to call the priest,
Who'll hugger-mugger France in holy orders
Each time the Dutch or Spaniard clip our borders.
It's on approval— Jesuits, you fill
The cup of kings; confusion serves my will.

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Go pimp to minors, act for potentates,
Receive the King of Kings, the Three Estates:
You'll famish your fraternal, flattened head,
And diet on the Lord's unleavened bread.
Sons follow mothers, swallow when they're fed,
Or the switched king goes supperless to bed.
Footstool to tutors, father of the realm,
He'll kiss my regent's rod to touch the helm.
Nuns must instruct him, sharpers plan his play—
I'll split each second in each single day,
Until his kingship seem a circus ground,
Where clowns on horseback, pricking round and round,
Unhorse their doubles, ring within a ring—
The grasping child, the unremitting king.
All earth is growing . . . Kings have died in sport . . .
But you, my Husband? Murder cut you short.
Your great nerve gone, Sire, sleep without a care;
Though English pirates hanged off Finisterre
Toss in their shotted hammocks to the sea,
Will water dam our blood at Saint Denis?
There chiseled bolster and Carrara hound
Show no emotion when we kiss the ground.
Look, seasons circle to the scyther's ring
Of gleaning children; king must follow king,
And walk the plank to his immortal leap.
My son is adding inches in his sleep,
I hear his red confessor weigh Versailles.
Sing lullaby, my Son, sing lullaby.
My child has nightmares. Rock him, he will cry
For seal and scepter, ask the queen to die . . .
And so I press Concini's palm to mine;
I am his vintage, for his living vine
Entangles me and oozes mortal wine
Moment to moment. By repeated crime
Even a queen survives her little time.
But you, my Husband? How you used to look
For blood and pastime! If you ever took
Unfair advantages by right of birth,
Pardon the easy virtues of the earth

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Malcolm Lowry

THE BRAVEST BOAT

It was a day of spindrift and blowing sea-foam, with black clouds presaging rain driven over the mountains from the sea by a wild March wind.

But a clean silver sea light came from along the horizon where the sky itself was like glowing silver. And far away over in America the snowy volcanic peak of Mount Hood stood on high, disembodied, cut off from earth, yet much too close, which was an even surer presage of rain, as though the mountains had advanced, or were advancing.

In the park of the seaport the giant trees swayed, and taller than any were the tragic Seven Sisters, a constellation of seven noble red cedars that had grown there for hundreds of years, but were now dying, blasted, with bare peeled tops and stricken boughs. (They were dying rather than live longer near civilization. Yet though everyone had forgotten they were called after the Pleiades and thought they were named with civic pride after the seven daughters of a butcher, who seventy years before when the growing city was named Gaspool, had all danced together in a shop window, nobody had the heart to cut them down.)

The angelic wings of the seagulls circling over the tree tops shone very white against the black sky. Fresh snow from the night before lay far down the slopes of the Canadian mountains, whose freezing summits, massed peak behind spire, jaggedly traversed the country northward as far as the eye could reach. And highest of all an eagle, with the poise of a skier, shot endlessly down the world.

In the mirror, reflecting this and much beside, of an old weighing machine with the legend "Your weight and your destiny" encircling its forehead and which stood on the embankment between

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the streetcar terminus and a hamburger stall, in this mirror along the reedy edge of the stretch of water below known as Lost Lagoon two figures in mackintoshes were approaching, a man and a beautiful passionate-looking girl, both bare-headed, and both extremely fair, and hand-in-hand, so that you would have taken them for young lovers, but that they were alike as brother and sister, and the man, although he walked with youthful nervous speed, now seemed older than the girl.

The man, fine-looking, tall, yet thick-set, very bronzed, and on approaching still closer obviously a good deal older than the girl, and wearing one of those blue belted trenchcoats favored by merchant marine officers of any country, though without any corresponding cap—moreover the trenchcoat was rather too short in the sleeve so that you could see some tattooing on his wrist, as he approached nearer still it seemed to be an anchor—whereas the girl's raincoat was of some sort of entrancing forest-green corduroy—the man paused every now and then to gaze into the lovely laughing face of his girl, and once or twice they both stopped, gulping in great draughts of salty clean sea and mountain air. A child smiled at them, and they smiled back. But the child belonged elsewhere, and the couple were unaccompanied.

In the lagoon swam wild swans, and many wild ducks: mallards and buffleheads and scaups, golden eyes, and cackling black coots with carved ivory bills. The little buffleheads often took flight from the water and some of them blew about like doves among the smaller trees. Under these trees lining the bank other ducks were sitting meekly on the sloping lawn, their beaks tucked into their plumage rumpled by the wind. The smaller trees were apples and hawthorns, some just opening into bloom even before they had foliage, and weeping willows, from whose branches small showers from the night's rain were scattered on the two figures as they passed.

A red-breasted merganser cruised in the lagoon, and at this swift and angry sea bird, with his proud disordered crest, the two were now gazing with a special sympathy, perhaps because he looked lonely without his mate. Ah, they were wrong. The red-breasted merganser was now joined by his wife and on a sudden duck's impulse and with immense fuss the two wild creatures flew off to settle on another part of the lagoon. And for some reason this simple fact

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appeared to make these two good people—for nearly all people are good who walk in parks—very happy again.

Now at a distance they saw a small boy, accompanied by his father who was kneeling on the bank, trying to sail a toy boat in the lagoon. But the blustery March wind soon slanted the tiny yacht into trouble and the father hauled it back, reaching out with his curved stick, and set it on an upright keel again for his son.

Your weight and your destiny.

Suddenly the girl's face, at close quarters in the weighing machine's mirror, seemed struggling with tears: she unbuttoned the top button of her coat to readjust her scarf, revealing, attached to a gold chain around her neck, a small gold cross. They were quite alone now, standing on top of the embankment by the machine, save for a few old men feeding the ducks below, and the father and his son with the toy yacht, all of whom had their backs turned, while an empty tram abruptly city-bound trundled round the minute terminus square; and the man, who had been trying to light his pipe, took her in his arms and tenderly kissed her, and then pressing his face against her cheek, held her a moment closely.

The couple, having gone down obliquely to the lagoon once more, had now passed the boy with his boat and his father. They were smiling again. Or as much as they could while eating hamburgers. And they were smiling still as they passed the slender reeds where a northwestern redwing was trying to pretend he had no notion of nesting, the northwestern redwing who like all birds in these parts may feel superior to man in that he is his own customs official, and can cross the wild border without let.

Along the far side of Lost Lagoon the green dragons grew thickly, their sheathed and cowled leaves giving off their peculiar animal-like odor. The two lovers were approaching the forest in which, ahead, several footpaths threaded the ancient trees. The park, seagirt, was very large, and like many parks throughout the Pacific Northwest, wisely left in places to the original wilderness. In fact, though its beauty was probably unique, it was quite like some American parks, you might have thought, save for the Union Jack that galloped evermore by a pavilion, and but for the apparition, at this moment, passing by on the carefully landscaped road slightly above, which led with its tunnels and detours to a suspension bridge, of a

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posse of Royal Canadian Mounted Policemen mounted royally upon the cushions of an American Chevrolet.

Nearer the forest were gardens with sheltered beds of snowdrops and here and there a few crocuses lifting their sweet chalices. The man and his girl now seemed lost in thought, breasting the buffeting wind that blew the girl's scarf out behind her like a pennant and blew the man's thick fair hair about his head.

A loudspeaker, enthroned on a wagon, barked from the city of Enochvilleport composed of dilapidated half-skyscrapers, at different levels, some with all kinds of scrap-iron, even broken aeroplanes, on their roofs, others being moldy stock exchange buildings, new beer parlors crawling with verminous light even in mid-afternoon and resembling gigantic emerald-lit public lavatories for both sexes, masonries containing English tea-shoppes where your fortune could be told by a female relative of Maximilian of Mexico, totem pole factories, drapers' shops with the best Scotch tweed and opium dens in the basement (though no bars, as if, like some hideous old roué shuddering with every unmentionable secret vice this city without gaiety had cackled "No, I draw the line at that.—What would our wee laddies come to then?"), cerise conflagrations of cinemas, modern apartment buildings, and other soulless Behemoths, housing, it might be, noble invisible struggles, of literature, the drama, art or music, the student's lamp and the rejected manuscript; or indescribable poverty and degradation, between which civic attractions were squeezed occasional lovely dark ivy-clad old houses that seemed weeping, cut off from all light, on their knees, and elsewhere bankrupt hospitals, and one or two solid-stoned old banks, held up that afternoon; and among which appeared too, at infrequent intervals, beyond a melancholy never-striking black and white clock that said three, dwarfed spires belonging to frame façades with blackened rose windows, queer grimed onion-shaped domes, and even Chinese pagodas, so that first you thought you were in the Orient, then Turkey or Russia, though finally, but for the fact that some of these were churches, you would be sure you were in hell: despite that anyone who had ever really been in hell must have given Enochvilleport a nod of recognition, further affirmed by the spectacle, at first not unpicturesque, of the numerous sawmills relentlessly smoking and champing away like demons, Molochs fed by whole moun-

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tainsides of forests that never grew again, or by trees that made way for grinning regiments of villas in the background of "our expanding and fair city," mills that shook the very earth with their tumult, filling the windy air with their sound as of a wailing and gnashing of teeth: all these curious achievements of man, together creating as we say "the jewel of the Pacific," went as though down a great incline to a harbor more spectacular then Rio de Janeiro and San Francisco put together, with deep-sea freighters moored at every angle for miles in the roadstead, but to whose heroic prospect nearly the only human dwellings visible on this side of the water that had any air of belonging, or in which their inhabitants could be said any longer to participate, were, paradoxically, a few lowly little self-built shacks and floathouses, that might have been driven out of the city altogether, down to the water's edge into the sea itself, where they stood on piles, like fishermen's huts (which several of them apparently were), or on rollers, some dark and tumbledown, others freshly and prettily painted, these last quite evidently built or placed with some human need for beauty in mind, even if under the permanent threat of eviction, and all standing, even the most sombre, with their fluted tin chimneys smoking here and there like toy tramp steamers, as though in defiance of the town, before eternity. In Enochvilleport itself some ghastly-colored neon signs had long since been going through their unctuous twitchings and gesticulations that nostalgia and love transforms into a poetry of longing: more happily one began to flicker: PALOMAR, LOUIS ARMSTRONG AND HIS ORCHESTRA. A huge new gray dead hotel that at sea might be a landmark of romance, belched smoke out of its turreted haunted-looking roof, as if it had caught fire, and beyond that all the lamps were blazing within the grim courtyard of the law courts, equally at sea a trysting place of the heart, outside which one of the stone lions having recently been blown up was covered reverently with a white cloth, and inside which for a month a group of stainless citizens had been trying a sixteen-year-old boy for murder.

Nearer the park the apron lights appeared on a sort of pebble-dashed Y.M.C.A.-Hall-cum-variety theater saying TAMMUZ *The Master Hypnotist, To-nite 8:30,* and running past this the tramlines, down which another parkwise streetcar was approaching, could be seen extending almost to the department store in whose show window

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Tammuz' subject, perhaps a somnolent descendant of the seven sisters whose fame had eclipsed even that of the Pleiades, but whose announced ambition was to become a female psychiatrist, had been sleeping happily and publicly in a double bed for the last three days as an advance publicity stunt for tonight's performance.

Above Lost Lagoon on the road now mounting toward the suspension bridge in the distance much as a piece of jazz music mounts toward a break, a newsboy cried: "LASH ORDERED FOR SAINT PIERRE! SIXTEEN YEAR OLD BOY, CHILDSLAYER, TO HANG! Read all about it!"

The weather too was foreboding. Yet seeing the wandering lovers the other passers-by on this side of the lagoon, a wounded soldier lying on a bench smoking a cigarette, and one or two of those destitute souls, the very old who haunt parks—since, faced with a choice, the very old will sometimes prefer, rather than to keep a room and starve, at least in such a city as this, somehow to eat and live outdoors—smiled too.

For as the girl walked along beside the man with her arm through his and as they smiled together and their eyes met with love, or they paused, watching the blowing seagulls, or the ever-changing scene of the snow-freaked Canadian mountains with their fleecy indigo chasms, or to listen to the deep-tongued majesty of a merchantman's echoing roar (these things that made Enochvilleport's ferocious aldermen imagine that it was the city itself that was beautiful, and maybe they were half right), the whistle of a ferryboat as it sidled across the inlet northward, what memories might not be evoked in a poor soldier, in the breasts of the bereaved, the old, even, who knows, in the mounted policemen, not merely of young love, but of lovers, as they seemed to be, so much in love that they were afraid to lose a moment of their time together?

Yet only a guardian angel of these two would have known—and surely they must have possessed a guardian angel—the strangest of all strange things of which they were thinking, save that, since they had spoken of it so often before, and especially, when they had opportunity, on this day of the year, each knew of course that the other was thinking about it, to such an extent indeed that it was no surprise, it only resembled the beginning of a ritual when the man said, as they entered the main path of the forest, through

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whose branches that shielded them from the wind could be made out, from time to time, suggesting a fragment of music manuscript, a bit of the suspension bridge itself:

"It was a day just like this that I set the boat adrift. It was twenty-nine years ago in June."

"It was twenty-nine years ago in June, darling. And it was June twenty-seventh."

"It was five years before you were born, Astrid, and I was ten years old and I came down to the bay with my father."

"It was five years before I was born, you were ten years old, and you came down to the wharf with your father. Your father and grandfather had made you the boat between them and it was a fine one, ten inches long, smoothly varnished and made of wood from your model airplane box, with a new strong white sail."

"Yes, it was balsa wood from my model airplane box and my father sat beside me, telling me what to write for a note to put in it."

"Your father sat beside you, telling you what to write," Astrid laughed, "and you wrote:

"Hello.

"My name is Sigurd Storlesen. I am ten years old. Right now I am sitting on the wharf at Fearnought Bay, Clallam County, State of Washington, U.S.A., 5 miles south of Cape Flattery on the Pacific side, and my Dad is beside me telling me what to write. Today is June 27, 1922. My Dad is a forest warden in the Olympic National Forest but my Grandad is the lighthouse keeper at Cape Flattery. Beside me is a small shiny canoe which you now hold in your hand. It is a windy day and my Dad said to put the canoe in the water when I have put this in and glued down the lid which is a piece of balsa wood from my model airplane box.

"Well must close this note now, but first I will ask you to tell the Seattle Star that you have found it, because I am going to start reading the paper from today and looking for a piece that says, who when and where it was found.

"Thanks. Sigurd Storlesen."

"Yes, then my father and I put the note inside, and we glued down the lid and sealed it and put the boat on the water."

"You put the boat on the water and the tide was going out

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and away it went. The current caught it right off and carried it out and you watched it till it was out of sight!"

The two had now reached a clearing in the forest where a few gray squirrels were scampering about on the grass. A dark-browed Indian in a windbreaker, utterly absorbed by his friendly task, stood with a sleek black squirrel sitting on his shoulder nibbling popcorn he was giving it from a bag. This reminded them to get some peanuts to feed the bears, whose cages were over the way.

Ursus Horribilis: and now they tossed peanuts to the sad lumbering sleep-heavy creatures—though at least these two grizzlies were together, they even had a home—maybe still too sleepy to know where they were, still wrapped in a dream of their timberfalls and wild blueberries in the Cordilleras Sigurd and Astrid could see again, straight ahead of them, between the trees, beyond a bay.

But how should they stop thinking of the little boat?

Twelve years it had wandered. Through the tempests of winter, over sunny summer seas, what tide rips had caught it, what wild sea birds, shearwaters, storm petrels, jaegers, that follow the thrashing propellers, the dark albatross of these northern waters, swooped upon it, or warm currents edged it lazily toward land—and blue-water currents sailed it after the albacore, with fishing boats like white giraffes—or glacial drifts tossed it about fuming Cape Flattery itself. Perhaps it had rested, floating in a sheltered cove, where the killer whale smote, lashed, the deep clear water; the eagle and the salmon had seen it, a baby seal stared with her wondering eyes, only for the little boat to be thrown aground, catching the rainy afternoon sun, on cruel barnacled rocks by the waves, lying aground knocked from side to side in an inch of water like a live thing, or a poor old tin can, pushed, pounded ashore, and swung around, reversed again, left high and dry, and then swept another yard up the beach, or carried under a lonely salt-gray shack, to drive a seine fisherman crazy all night with its faint plaintive knocking, before it ebbed out in the dark autumn dawn, and found its way afresh, over the deep, coming through thunder, to who will ever know what fierce and desolate uninhabited shore, known only to the dread Wendigo, where not even an Indian could have found it, unfriended there, lost, until it was borne out to sea once more by the great brimming black tides of January, or the huge calm tides of the midsummer moon, to start its journey all over again——

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Astrid and Sigurd came to a large enclosure, set back from a walk, with two vine-leaved maple trees (their scarlet tassels, delicate precursors of their leaves, already visible) growing through the top, a sheltered cavernous part to one side for a lair, and the whole, save for the barred front, covered with stout large-meshed wire—considered sufficient protection for one of the most Satanic beasts left living on earth.

Two animals inhabited the cage, spotted like deceitful pastel leopards, and in appearance like decorated, maniacal-looking cats: their ears were provided with huge tassels and, as if this were in savage parody of the vine-leaved maples, from the brute's chin tassels also depended. Their legs were as long as a man's arm, and their paws, clothed in gray fur out of which shot claws curved like scimitars, were as big as a man's clenched fist.

And the two beautiful demonic creatures prowled and paced endlessly, searching the base of their cage, between whose bars there was just room to slip a murderous paw—always a hop out of reach an almost invisible sparrow went pecking away in the dust—searching with eternal voraciousness, yet seeking in desperation also some way out, passing and repassing each other rhythmically, as though truly damned and under some compelling enchantment.

And yet as they watched the terrifying Canadian lynx, in which seemed to be embodied in animal form all the pure ferocity of nature, as they watched, crunching peanuts themselves now and passing the bag between them, before the lovers' eyes still sailed that tiny boat, battling with the seas, at the mercy of a wilder ferocity yet, all those years before Astrid was born.

Ah, its absolute loneliness amid those wastes, those wildernesses, of rough rainy seas bereft even of sea birds, between contrary winds, or in the great dead windless swell that comes following a gale; and then with the wind springing up and blowing the spray across the sea like rain, like a vision of creation, blowing the little boat as it climbed the highlands into the skies, from which sizzled cobalt lightnings, and then sank down into the abyss, but already was climbing again, while the whole sea crested with foam like lambs' wool went furling off to leeward, the whole vast moon-driven expanse like the pastures and valleys and snow-capped ranges of a Sierra Madre in delirium, in ceaseless motion, rising and falling, and the little boat

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rising, and falling into a paralyzing sea of white drifting fire and smoking spume by which it seemed overwhelmed: and all this time a sound, like a high sound of singing, yet as sustained in harmony as telegraph wires, or like the unbelievably high perpetual sound of the wind where there is nobody to listen, which perhaps does not exist, or the ghost of the wind in the rigging of ships long lost, and perhaps it was the sound of the wind in its toy rigging, as again the boat slanted onward: but even then what further unfathomed deeps had it oversailed, until what birds of ill omen turned heavenly for it at last, what iron birds with saber wings skimming forever through the murk above the gray immeasurable swells, imparted mysteriously their own homing knowledge to it, the lonely buoyant little craft, nudging it with their beaks under golden sunsets in a blue sky, as it sailed close in to mountainous coasts of clouds with stars over them, or burning coasts at sunset once more, as it rounded not only the terrible spume-drenched rocks, like incinerators in sawmills, of Flattery, but other capes unknown, those twelve years, of giant pinnacles, images of barrenness and desolation, upon which the heart is thrown and impaled eternally! —And strangest of all how many ships themselves had threatened it, during that voyage of only some three score miles as the crow flies from its launching to its final port, looming out of the fog and passing by harmlessly all those years—those years too of the last sailing ships, rigged to the moonsail, sweeping by into their own oblivion—but ships cargoed with guns or iron for impending wars, what freighters now at the bottom of the sea he, Sigurd, had voyaged in for that matter, freighted with old marble and wine and cherries-in-brine, or whose engines even now were still somewhere murmuring: *Frère* Jacques! *Frère* Jacques!

What strange poem of God's mercy was this?

Suddenly across their vision a squirrel ran up a tree beside the cage and then, chattering shrilly, leaped from a branch and darted across the top of the wire mesh. Instantly, swift and deadly as lightning, one of the lynx sprang twenty feet into the air, hurtling straight to the top of the cage toward the squirrel, hitting the wire with a twang like a mammoth guitar, and simultaneously flashing through the wire its scimitar claws: Astrid cried out and covered her face.

But the squirrel, unhurt, untouched, was already running lightly along another branch, down to the tree, and away, while the infur-

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iated lynx sprang straight up, sprang again, and again and again and again, as his mate crouched spitting and snarling below.

Sigurd and Astrid began to laugh. Then this seemed obscurely unfair to the lynx, now solemnly washing his mate's face. The innocent squirrel, for whom they felt such relief, might almost have been showing off, almost, unlike the oblivious sparrow, have been taunting the caged animal. The squirrel's hairbreadth escape—the thousand-to-one-chance—that on second thought must take place every day, seemed meaningless. But all at once it did not seem meaningless that they had been there to see it.

"You know how I watched the paper and waited," Sigurd was saying, stooping to relight his pipe, as they walked on.

"The Seattle *Star,*" Astrid said.

"The Seattle *Star* . . . It was the first newspaper I ever read. Father always declared the boat had gone south—maybe to Mexico, and I seem to remember Grandad saying no, if it didn't break up on Tatoosh, the tide would take it right down Juan de Fuca Strait, maybe into Puget Sound itself. Well, I watched and waited for a long time and finally, as kids will, I stopped looking."

"And the years went on——"

"And I grew up. Grandad was dead by then. And the old man, you know about him. Well, he's dead too now. But I never forgot. Twelve years! Think of it—! Why, it voyaged around longer than we've been married."

"And we've been married seven years."

"Seven years today—"

"It seems like a miracle!"

But their words fell like spent arrows before the target of this fact.

They were walking, as they left the forest, between two long rows of Japanese cherry trees, next month to be an airy avenue of celestial bloom. The cherry trees behind, the forest reappeared, to left and right of the wide clearing, and skirting two arms of the bay. As they approached the Pacific, down the gradual incline, on this side remote from the harbor the wind grew more boisterous: gulls, glaucous and raucous, wheeled and sailed overhead, yelling, and were suddenly far out to sea.

And it was the sea that lay before them, at the end of the

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slope that changed into the steep beach, the naked sea, running deeply below, without embankment or promenade, or any friendly shacks, though some prettily built homes showed to the left, with one light in a window, glowing warmly through the trees on the edge of the forest itself, as of some stalwart Columbian Adam, who had calmly stolen back with his Eve into Paradise, under the flaming sword of the civic cherubim.

The tide was low. Offshore, white horses were running round a point. The headlong onrush of the tide of beaten silver flashing over its crossflowing underset was so fast the very surface of the sea seemed racing away.

Their path gave place to a cinder track in the familiar lee of an old frame pavilion, a deserted tea house boarded up since last summer. Dead leaves were slithering across the porch, past which on the slope to the right picnic benches, tables, a derelict swing, lay overturned, under a tempestuous grove of birches. It seemed cold, sad, inhuman there, and beyond, with the roar of that deep low tide. Yet there was that between the lovers which moved like a warmth, and might have thrown open the shutters, set the benches and tables aright, and filled the whole grove with the voices and children's laughter of summer. Astrid paused for a moment with a hand on Sigurd's arm while they were sheltered by the pavilion, and said, what she too had often said before, so that they always repeated these things almost like an incantation:

"I'll never forget it. That day when I was seven years old, coming to the park here on a picnic with my father and mother and brother. After lunch my brother and I came down to the beach to play. It was a fine summer day, and the tide was out, but there'd been this very high tide in the night, and you could see the lines of driftwood and seaweed where it had ebbed. . . . I was playing on the beach, and I found your boat!"

"You were playing on the beach and you found my boat. And the mast was broken."

"The mast was broken and shreds of sail hung dirty and limp. But your boat was still whole and unhurt, though it was scratched and weatherbeaten and the varnish was gone. I ran to my mother, and she saw the sealing wax over the cockpit, and, darling, I found your note!"

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"You found our note, my darling."

Astrid drew from her pocket a scrap of paper and holding it between them they bent over (though it was hardly legible by now and they knew it off by heart) and read:

Hello.

My name is Sigurd Storlesen. I am ten years old. Right now I am sitting on the wharf at Fearnought Bay, Clallam County, State of Washington, U.S.A., 5 miles south of Cape Flattery, on the Pacific side, and my Dad is beside me telling me what to write. Today is June 27, 1922. My Dad is a forest warden in the Olympic National Forest but my Grandad is the lighthouse keeper at Cape Flattery. Beside me is a small shiny canoe which you now hold in your hand. It is a windy day and my Dad said to put the canoe in the water when I have put this in and glued down the lid which is a piece of balsa wood from my model airplane box.

Well must close this note now, but first I will ask you to tell the Seattle Star that you have found it, because I am going to start reading the paper from today and looking for a piece that says, who when and where it was found.

Thanks. Sigurd Storlesen.

They came to the desolate beach strewn with driftwood, sculptured, whorled, silvered, piled everywhere by tides so immense there was a tideline of seaweed and detritus on the grass behind them, and great logs and shingle-bolts and writhing snags, crucificial, or frozen in a fiery rage—or better, a few bits of lumber almost ready to burn, for someone to take home, and automatically they threw them up beyond the sea's reach for some passing soul, remembering their own winters of need—and more snags there at the foot of the grove and visible high on the sea-scythed forest banks on either side, in which riven trees were growing, yearning over the shore. And everywhere they looked was wreckage, the toll of winter's wrath: wrecked hencoops, wrecked floats, the wrecked side of a fisherman's hut, its boards once hammered together, with its wrenched shiplap and extruding nails. The fury had extended even to the beach itself, formed in hummocks and waves and barriers of shingle and shells they had to climb up in places. And everywhere too was the grotesque macabre fruit of the sea, with its exhilarating iodine smell, nightmarish bulbs of kelp like antiquated motor horns, trailing brown satin streamers twenty feet

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long, sea wrack like demons, or the discarded casements of evil spirits that had been cleansed. Then more wreckage: boots, a clock, torn fishing nets, a demolished wheelhouse, a smashed wheel lying in the sand.

Nor was it possible to grasp for more than a moment that all this with its feeling of death and destruction and barrenness was only an appearance, that beneath the flotsam, under the very shells they crunched, within the trickling overflows of winterbournes they jumped over, down at the tide margin, existed, just as in the forest, a stirring and stretching of life, a seething of spring.

When Astrid and Sigurd were almost sheltered by an uprooted tree on one of these lower billows of beach they noticed that the clouds had lifted over the sea, though the sky was not blue but still that intense silver, so that they could see right across the Gulf and make out, or thought they could, the line of some Gulf Islands. A lone freighter with upraised derricks shipped seas on the horizon. A hint of the summit of Mount Hood remained, or it might have been clouds. They remarked too, in the southeast, on the sloping base of a hill, a triangle of storm-washed green, as if cut out of the overhanging murk there, in which were four pines, five telegraph posts, and a clearing resembling a cemetery. Behind them the icy mountains of Canada hid their savage peaks and snowfalls under still more savage clouds. And they saw that the sea was gray with whitecaps and currents charging offshore and spray blowing backwards from the rocks.

But when the full force of the wind caught them, looking from the shore, it was like gazing into chaos. The wind blew away their thoughts, their voices, almost their very senses, as they walked, crunching the shells, laughing and stumbling. Nor could they tell whether it was spume or rain that smote and stung their faces, whether spindrift from the sea or rain from which the sea was born, as now finally they were forced to a halt, standing there arm in arm. . . . And it was to this shore, through that chaos, by those currents, that their little boat with its innocent message had been brought out of the past finally to safety and a home.

But ah, the storms they had come through!

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Ernst Topitsch

THE SOCIOLOGY OF EXISTENTIALISM

No contemporary philosophical movement has unleashed such passionate controversy as Existentialism. While its supporters defend it as a new doctrine of salvation, its opponents have attacked it either as a kind of philosophically adorned lyric, or as the product of conscienceless intellectual sensationalism—*romanzi gialli,* thrillers, as Guido de Ruggiero, in the spirit of Benedetto Croce, called the works of the existential philosophers—or even as a nihilistic attack on the foundations of western thought and western morality. For the stereotyped thinking of the East it is a significant symptom of decay, a last outcropping of bourgeois decadence. All these emotional outpourings demonstrate that what is here in question is not primarily a problem of knowledge, but of the interpretation of living human situations.

All this demands a cultural-sociological analysis of this peculiar phenomenon. However, we must beware, here as everywhere, of a mere "unmasking" or "reduction" such as still clings, in part, to cultural sociology because of the controversial social position of its origins. The relations between existential philosophy and the fate of certain social groups in western Europe are indeed long and publicly known, but they neither exhaust the problem raised here nor justify prejudging its outcome. Yet a careful historical and sociological scrutiny may lead to that sober evaluation of the meaning and limits of existentialist thought, which is necessary in view of the passion of both sets of combatants.

In its essential points, existential philosophy appears as the outcome of a long and logical development of great philosophical scope. Its strongly modish style and often scarcely bearable affectation should not mislead us in this respect. It is a result of the progressive dissolu-

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tion of those anthropomorphic-normative systems, with the help of which, since the pre-Socratics, the metaphysical tradition has kept the explanation and the evaluation of the world entangled together at the cost of insoluble contradictions. True, the conceptual world of Greek objectivism, especially its amalgamation with the Christian doctrine of salvation which is still effective today, meant a great step beyond the naive personalization of nature in the myth; but for it too the human agent, the citizen and artist, was the measure of all things. The military array and political law of the Greek citizen-soldier are archetype and measure for Cosmos and Nomos, world-order and world-law. As punishment follows guilt, so effect follows cause: man understands causality on the basis of inviolable law. The skillful artisan produces utensils according to a well-considered plan, and the archetypal plans lie ready in the same way in the realm of the ideas. Physis, Nature, the great birth-giver, creates her living forms out of resisting matter. And over Cosmos and Nomos, over Aitia and Telos, over Eidos and Morphe, rules Logos, value-bearing order, meaning.

Thus there arose a world view whose fascinating power lay precisely in its objective weakness: it was an *interpretation of the cosmos after* the measure of man and society, but it seemed to permit a reversal of the relation, an interpretation of man and society after the measure of the cosmos.[1] And with the pathos of the absolute it fought the simple relativistic *homo-mensura* (man the measure of all things) principle of the sophists, which did not permit this reversal. But the fundamental inadequacies of this anthropomorphic-normative world-picture remained for a long time unnoticed, since it seemed to harmonize with indubitable matters of fact: with the invariability of the course of nature, with the independence of mathematics and logic from experience, with the inexplicable but undeniable regularities of biological morphogenesis and the permanence of species. The world of nature remained undiscriminated from the world of values—as is still shown by the fact that the word "law" is ambiguous even today.

To be sure, the flaws in this conception appeared as soon as the relation of reality and value was conceived with greater conceptual precision or became a pressing vital problem for human beings. Heraclitus complains—as do the Stoics later—of the disobedience of people

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to the "cosmic law," and Plato touches in the *Parmenides* on the alternative of building up the realm of ideas from the general concept—which also embraces the anti-valuable—or of receiving into the ideal world only the valuable, thus already presupposing a normative criterion. Again, with Aristotle the concept of the "natural," the model of human purposive action, fails when it comes to giving ethical directions for actual decisions. What is to pass in the ethical sense as "truly according to nature" is determined not by recourse to any sort of "nature," but by positive morality. In Stoic speculation all those personalizing analogies lead to empty tautological word-play like the familiar equation Telos=Physis=Nomos=Logos=Kosmos, i.e., the Ideal=the Natural=Natural Law=Divine Law=Cosmos.

Since values could not be founded on this basis, the irrationality and irrelevance to value of the cosmic process had to be noted. As early as in classical tragedy the belief in a rational, value-bearing world order was linked with belief in the political order; and this is the archetype of the cosmos-metaphysics. The road from Aeschylus to Euripides is the road from the victorious height of the city-state culture of Athens after the Persian wars to its collapse, and at the same time from the confident trust in a hard but just providence to resignation before the capricious play of Fortune. The Stoics worked out most clearly the basic contradiction involved here, not however recognizing it as such, and without drawing its consequences: their metaphysics viewed reality "as a well-ordered city" under the inviolable world law of Logos, their ethic demanded the steadfastness of the sage in the struggle against the whims of irrational Fortune.

II

The fact that these fallacies and contradictions were not recognized as such even by important thinkers, arises principally from causes outside the area of theory and logic.

In the first place, the distinction between knowledge and value is entirely foreign to the naive world-view from which philosophy too springs. Everyday consciousness and everyday language, into which the human being grows from childhood on, do not distinguish any purified, objective knowledge worked out by critical methods, but, so to speak, a ready-to-use total orientation, which already unites

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with the description of things a certain affective tone and an indication of how one ought to behave toward them. That this tangle can be undone only with difficulty, is clearest perhaps from the linguistic difficulties with which an objective sociology has to struggle. Our everyday consciousness produces a total picture in which the value characters appear to dwell indissolubly in things as "properties," a picture which thus assures to the human being a strong feeling of security. No words need be wasted in stressing the basic cultural significance of this fact. But such an amalgamation of knowledge and value is possible only so long as at least a relative stability prevails in both areas. Once the world of values becomes fluid—especially in connection with social tensions and conflicts—these total interpretations also break apart. An increase of social and ideological crises arises, as for instance in Greece at the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War.

In such periods of convulsion people often turn to philosophy in order to win back their lost security, and they are then ready to pay for it every price, even that of intellectual integrity. Thus it is not surprising that many thinkers in such situations seize on all the possibilities of security which the anthropomorphic-normative conceptual models seem to furnish; and that they gloss over with pseudo-solutions (as the examples have shown) the difficulties which they are bound to encounter in this process.

Finally, the secret of the historical success of these tautological formulae and circular inferences lies precisely in their vacuity, which made it possible to endow any and every ideological content with the claim to universal validity. For more than 2000 years such conceptual forms have served the most diverse values and ideals, purposes and interests. The Greek sage and Roman jurist, the Catholic schoolman and the man of letters of the Enlightenment, the liberal free-trader and the socialist revolutionary were all able to use this long-venerated world of concepts in order to establish their doctrines as "truly natural" or "truly reasonable" and to give them in this way the appearance of a higher legitimation. Add to this, that such empty formulae are especially suitable for all kinds of institutional rule. They awaken—especially in the governed—the impression of the unshakeable security of ultimate principles, while they in no way hinder the guiding authorities in their concrete decisions.

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III

Due to all these circumstances, these conceptual systems were penetrated only slowly by scientific criticism. The latter proceeded partly from mathematically formalized natural science, partly from the epistemological critique of Hume and Kant, partly from political theory and value-free sociology, in the form which reached its peak with Max Weber.

As early a thinker as William of Occam shrewdly recognized the fundamental error of the anthropomorphic-normative world-view: the confusion of the real setting of goals and norms by acting and choice-making creatures with their merely metaphorical use for the description of natural processes, the result of which, when their course is undisturbed, is determinate from the start (*Quodlibet IV*, qu. 2). Yet it was nearly three hundred years before the method of modern science actually excluded those metaphors. As mathematical hypotheses became connected with empirical verification, there was simply no further place for anthropomorphic analogies. Besides, the new method produced a constantly increasing wealth of concrete, mutually confirmatory and complementary results of such precision and practical significance, that one may speak of an absolutely new epoch in intellectual history. But though the modern concept of natural law was indeed radically distinct from the concept of the norm, the conviction of the sublimity of the cosmic order nevertheless survived long after, as for example in Newton and Kant. Yet the same thinker who attested his reverence for the starry heavens already saw the implication of the insight that natural laws have nothing to say about value or obligation. The "cosmos" idea separates off from the empirical world and establishes itself independently as a *mundus intelligibilis,* a kingdom of ends, which is ordered according to an inviolable and non-contradictory moral law, as the empirical world is by the laws of nature.

Meantime, after beginnings in Suarez, Malebranche and Spinoza, the separation of knowledge and value had been completed with David Hume. In his definitive *Treatise of Human Nature* the Scotsman explains with cool clarity that evaluating attitudes have no theoretical content. They are original data, which demonstrate nothing beyond themselves, since they say nothing about any matter of

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fact. Only statements can be true or false. And as little information as the affective experiences of evaluation convey objectively about empirical matters of fact, just so little can they be derived from facts or founded on them. These insights have penetrated only slowly in Western Europe, since the Enlightenment and even the older positivism had ethical-political aims too strong to permit easy acceptance of this view of human values. Only Neo-Positivism has fully appropriated Hume's point of view: "We feel, that even if all *possible* scientific questions were answered, our vital problems are not yet touched."[2]

To these developments must be added also a tradition, often interrupted but never wholly suppressed, which, like the Platonic philosophy, proceeded from the collapse of the Athenian city-state culture. If Plato set everything in motion, from mathematics to myth, from the contemplation of the ideas to the judgment of the dead, in order to transcend and overcome this devastation, Thucydides, with restrained passion, investigated the actual events in their inner relationships, and created a work which to some extent embraces, *in statu nascendi,* the foundations of an empirical-critical science of history, sociology and political theory. With deep earnestness and manly austerity the historian confronts the undeniable brutality of the course of history. He is still steeped in the concrete ethic of the Periclean city-state, but he never gives the slightest hint of an attempt to win back through speculation what no longer existed in reality. He excludes not only popular belief, but also all quasi-philosophizing on the line of the "cosmos" doctrine, especially since its impotence was obvious to the political thinker in the catastrophe of the city-state cosmos.

The foundations laid by Thucydides were, indeed, soon drowned out by normative-philosophical and historical-theological currents, quite apart from the fact that rhetoric seized control of history and suffocated every serious endeavor in vapid euphuism. Only rarely does something of the spirit of the Athenian break through, when shrewd and disinterested men speak up—men schooled in classical historiography and in actual politics—such as Tacitus, Machiavelli, Hobbes or Hume. Even thinkers with the scientific ardor of a Comte or Marx are still searching, in the first half of the last century, for a social "world-law" entirely in the sense of Logos and Cosmos-metaphysics: a law which was to represent at one and the same time

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an inviolable necessity, a highest directive for action and beyond this a guarantee of success. It was Max Weber—in the combination of a lofty ethic with relentless perspicuity of vision a spiritual kinsman of Thucydides—who, at the beginning of this century, first demonstrated the impossibility of such constructions, and, in the wake of Luigi Brentano, sharply divided the scientific investigation of social facts from all value interpretations.

Thus the traditional identification of being and value became untenable, after their confusion for thousands of years. The natural sciences no longer needed the personalizing analogies; the social sciences investigated, by the empirical-critical method, their archetypes, the structures of society. This knowledge had, to be sure, its price: the insight into the indifference to value of the cosmic process and into the impossibility of a scientific justification of our ultimate values.

IV

When in 1919, before the students of Munich, Max Weber developed these views in his famous address "Science as Vocation," he produced downright consternation. The most important representatives of the philosophy oriented to the cultural disciplines—Theodor Litt, Max Scheler, E. Spranger—then took issue with the radical theses of Weber's position, without however being able to weaken it in its decisive points. The best insight into the ideological atmosphere of these discussions, however, is provided not by their contributions, but by the monograph of Erich von Kahler: "The Vocation of Science." Here all the wishes and yearnings are revealed and enunciated without regard to the rules of demonstration. The plaint is raised that "the old science is shattered in its human significance" and that it ought to be replaced by a "new, contemplating and not merely thinking science," which "must be a knowing in the unique, age-old magical meaning, which can embrace its own destiny, and not an aggregate of bits of learning."

Thus the generation which came home from the First World War stood under the shattering impression at once of the theoretical invalidity of value metaphysics and of the indemonstrability of ultimate values by objective science. Add to this: in actual life the dissolution of the social order with its collective value patterns, and above

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all the pressure of industrial mass society on the bourgeois cultured class. In this situation, in which "man was disillusioned in every objective belief and everything had become doubtful to him, since all significant interpretations of life had been rendered doubtful by relativization, there remained only the retreat into his own inwardness, in order to win here that stability which was no longer to be found in an objective world order."[3]

It is not easy to find a common denominator for the different currents of existentialist thought. So the following can only pass for a sort of ideal-type construction, which does, however, endeavor to grasp the central problem. The basic theme of "existence" is not new. Since Indian mysticism there has been a recurrent tendency to retreat to a theoretically incomprehensible and therefore unassailable place, usually an "inwardness," whose undeniable being remains as a last, inalienable talisman in a world that has become meaningless and godless, "forsaken by Being." Beyond all explicit knowledge and evaluation, volition and action, even, in the last analysis, beyond self-consciousness, lies the primal existential ground. Over against it positive knowledge appears as a merely instrumental value, and the conscious ordering of life only as an alienated shell and possible mask. But even this point of view has its specific difficulties: "existence" here would mean non-thinking and non-acting, even the dissolution of self-consciousness. Therefore not only is all philosophizing about existence impossible, but the whole position would be thinkable only for a being incapable of action, since the resolve to refrain from an active interference in events already represents a significant decision in favor of what is to be tolerated. Moreover, if one expresses oneself about the inexpressible, one contradicts one's own starting point and has besides no criterion to judge which of several mutually incompatible expressions of this sort is correct. The parallel to cosmos metaphysics—seemingly so diametrically opposite—is astonishing: as the emptiness of tautology occurs there (Logos=Nomos=Physis=Kosmos), so here the emptiness of "existence" or of "being"—both can be filled with any and every content at the cost of a *petitio principii*.

Whether and how these empty places can be filled with determinate contents, depends in each case on presuppositions of a non-theoretical kind. Where thinkers decisively wanted something, they could—as we have shown—subsume it without difficulty under these

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formulae. One can also leave them empty if one wants to say nothing or has nothing to say but wants to give the impression of saying something. The existential philosophers present difficulties in both respects.

Yet clarification comes if we consider the starting point of existential philosophy. It lies, as already indicated, in that peculiar intermixture of problems of nature and of value which arose from the decline of the anthropomorphic-normative conceptual world and which has been extolled and excoriated under the name of the "disenchantment" of the world. Karl Jaspers is directly dependent on Max Weber's conception of value-free science, and beyond this historical relationship existential philosophy has been justly considered, from the systematic point of view as well, a parallel or complementary position to positivism. Upon critical reflection, however, that "disenchantment" shows itself to be a misunderstanding. Positivism had only shown, that in attempting to demonstrate ultimate values we derive only the values that we have presupposed. Now, the need for "demonstrations" of one's own value principles arises as a rule only when the latter have somehow already become doubtful. The result of such efforts is either a dogmatic self-appeasement—absoluteness is ascribed with the greatest passionateness precisely to the values that had grown problematic—or a strengthened doubt. The latter, however, is very easily confused with the systematic freedom from values characteristic of science, to produce a chimerical monster. As our particular evaluations were earlier attributed to things, so now are our doubt and uncertainty made a property of things—which are naturally as little "objectively valueless" as "objectively valuable"—and the whole is blamed on "science." Thus the "disenchantment" is exaggerated to that almost grotesque form, which L. Binswanger has given it: what appears in science as the really positive, as the object of statement and investigation, turns out, as interpreted from the point of view of human existence, to be precisely the Meon, Non-Being: that is, naked terror.[4]

Thus for many thinkers science has become since, roughly, the beginning of this century a sort of metaphysical incubus. They speak of logical knowledge as a "special form of death," of the "skeleton fingers of science"; they discover the "mind as antagonist of the soul" and call for rescue from this distress. Sometimes the "living of life,"

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sometimes phenomenology (still regarded by its founder as an exact science) is supposed to help. To the "knowledge of power and achievement" of scientific research, presumably born of the human will to power, Max Scheler opposes the knowledge of culture and salvation. Others, again, would regard all proven scientific procedure as distortion and violation of the given and explain it as arbitrary convention, as if anything could be achieved thereby for the security of values. The "breaking of the power of the intellect" in favor of a "more authentic asking"[5] becomes the slogan in a struggle in which the means are not always scrupulously chosen.

It is in this spiritual atmosphere that the basic anti-objectivistic attitude of modern existential philosophy has its origin, while Kierkegaard's battle against Hegel's objective idealism—as he understood it—sprang from other motives. The objective world of "what is," the world of human knowledge and action, appears in Heidegger as the realm of homelessness and hopelessness. It is fashioned by the aggressive will and by calculating arrangement and reaches its peak in technology in gadgets that can be brought out, on order, as thought out. Man's "Fall" into a world of objects takes place for the first time, however, not in the modern positivistic world, but in objectivizing metaphysics ever since Plato and Aristotle: from these two comes the "technical" interpretation of thought as "the process of reflection in the service of doing and making." Even the language of science, yes, even the language of everyday, is corrupted. It entrusts itself to "our mere willing and contriving as an instrument of mastery over the real"; it "falls into devising arteries of traffic from object to object in contempt of every boundary." In "gossip" it becomes the means by which the self is lost in the impersonal "they," in the conventions of mass society, the inauthenticity of which suffocates and levels off everything essential. Although Heidegger frequently insists that he does not mean to "evaluate," these conceptions of his must clearly be felt to be evaluations—as F. J. v. Rintelen has seen them in his subtle and scholarly book.[6]

Out of this world of night and this death of meaning, man must be redeemed. In the early Heidegger the pathos of the awakener still prevails: who, through dread, would frighten the forgetters of Being out of their false securities, who would prepare them for the *unum necessarium* of being themselves, and of authenticity—while, later,

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promise and new security come into view. Man who had been displaced from the truth of Being is again to find his home in the neighborhood and the light of Being, in order to dwell there. To this end a kind of new saving knowledge—to use Max Scheler's expression—is to be revealed: knowledge which has nothing to do with the science of the aggressive will and its denumerating and calculating logic, let alone logistics. So we hear again one of the dominant themes of German philosophy in our century, the wish for a "second knowledge," which assures man what the exactitude of science denies him. Heidegger withdraws in his last works from phenomenology as too "scientific," and turns to the "thought of the truth of Being." Wherein actually this "more thinking thinking"—thinking more profound than the calculation with objects—is really supposed to consist, Heidegger can say only in hints and circumlocutions. This thought speaks of "the ecstatic stance within the truth of Being," and signifies the "shining-hiding advent of Being itself." It is "what the singers say" whose "singing turns aside from all premeditated achievement"; a saying which "desires nothing and seeks for no contrivable object," but as a proclamation of redemption "brings for mortals the trace of the vanished gods into the night of their world."[7]

The thinking of Being lies beyond the distinction of theory from practice. It is thinking toward Being and nothing more. Thus it cannot furnish any maxims for daily life or give it a helping hand. To be sure, "the guidance for those guideposts which must become law and maxim for man, can come from Being itself." But how one can tell real from merely seeming or even false guides to Being, remains unsaid. Such questions do not even appear very significant, since "what is more essential than all contrivances of rules of thumb is that man find his way into the truth of Being to abide there. Only this abiding affords the experience of durability." Thus Heidegger withdraws into the contemplative region of the "neighborhood of Being."[8]

Thus a new Erich von Kahler could arise today and pose his sybilline question not to value-free science but to existential philosophy: "And the other, the genuine, which threatens us all so urgently in our extreme distress; the great root question of Wisdom: 'What is to be done?' Who answers it? And if existential philosophy cannot answer it, is it not then meaningless, yes, more meaningless

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than science, which does not at any rate endeavor to conceal its perplexity under high-sounding words?" True, the pathos of the '20s is strange to our generation, but the actual situation as such is clear and has long been perceived by critical observers. Rintelen emphasizes justly that the existential philosophers only very seldom come to "determined decisions," but like to leave their attitude open, refusing to answer, and showing determination only in their rejection of any significant knowledge. He speaks of determined irresponsibility, decisive indecision, and undecided resolution.[9]

Thus existential philosophy forms one great circle which begins, as its presupposition, with the truly "existential" perplexity over against the objective world—and, logically, must end with it. Objectless resolution, vacuous vocation, the inexpressible and yet so much talked-of existence, the withdrawal from the "world of premeditated achievement" and the yearned-for "abiding in the neighborhood of Being" beyond theory and practice are, in the last analysis, circumlocutions for the fact that the existential philosopher cannot or will not take part in the concrete tasks and problems of science and practical life. Before the actual decisions between true and false, good and bad, right and wrong, friend and foe, he gladly retreats to the indifference of personal existence. But since a being capable of action cannot seriously stand "beyond theory and practice," the existential void is then filled in with a particular attitude to life, and often the most irresponsible: that of an aesthetic-romantic esotericism, which permits the philosopher to "pass by, without despising them,"[10] the concrete tasks of investigating and ordering the world.

V

It has been said that the problems of existential philosophy are the expression of the present crisis of mankind. This proves on closer examination however to be above all the crisis of a relatively small group, namely of the European cultured class.

This cultured class, which is today exposed to a serious and perhaps fatal threat, must be sharply distinguished from the groups of scientific-technical experts, although in practice many overlappings can occur. These two forms of European intelligence rely on entirely different presuppositions. The position of the expert is based on objec-

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tive, necessarily specialized knowledge and its practical application. He is the bearer and product of that great process of rationalization, which, in co-operation with natural science, technology, economic competition and political rivalry, has produced modern industrial society. This development not only burst asunder the structure of the feudal and later bourgeois society of Old Europe, but also shaped the great colonial and half-colonial areas which are now overtaking and threatening the mother continent. True, this new situation affects experts too in Europe, yet in general everywhere in the world the significance of objective knowledge and skill is doubtless on the increase. But above all the principle of expert knowledge independent of the cultured group is not in the least touched by the exclusion of Europe from its leading position.

Things are quite different for the bearers of culture, whose position rests, not on the possession of universally valid knowledge and technical information, but on the social recognition of certain valuable forms of life. At first in the nobility of early antiquity and the Middle Ages musical-literary culture occurs alongside skill in fighting as a stylization of life. It has received its specifically modern form only since the Renaissance: the quality of culture competes with the vocational grace of the priest as a personal grace that can be earned. Thus, usurping despots strive, as cultural Maecenases, for a legitimation which religion and tradition cannot give them. Yet the humanistic class of scholars and literati is still much too weak to be able to hazard serious conflict with the existing authorities. Only with the progress of secularization and the bourgeois union of property and culture against the union of throne and altar, does culture acquire a quasi-religious character. The bourgeoisie develops a belief in freedom and humanity as its temples—theaters, museums, cultural institutions—are supported by endowments and administered by a secular cultural priesthood.

Through the social convulsions after the rise of an industrial laboring class, this bourgeois aristocracy of the spirit gradually loses its social prestige and its influence on the attitude of the people as a whole. Today the social presuppositions for the recognition of cultural values have to a large extent disappeared. Neither for the well-organized institutions which have taken the ideological lead in large parts of Europe nor for the ideology of the mass-welfare state does

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the cultivated personality in the traditional sense represent a value. Add to this, that the ideological groups in their dissensions are striving for the greatest possible self-sufficiency, so that it often looks as if a new Middle Ages would begin. But while in the Middle Ages the Christian tradition stood as the unique and unshakeable basis of spiritual life, the present is characterized by a plurality of authorities, whose rapid rise and fall stand in striking contrast to their claims to absoluteness, and are largely decided by forces recognizably different from "the power of the spirit." The hard fate of intellectuals in our time has become obvious: to have to talk and to be able to talk only where no talk decides.

This development, as a brutal fact, presents to the cultural world a demand, to which a fruitful answer, a "response" in Toynbee's sense, is not easy to find. Under such apparently overpowering pressure one easily takes flight into a spiritual esotericism, which retreats from "everyday" life and is thus robbed of the last possibilities of practical effectiveness. Thus many groups of intellectuals, equally estranged from the concrete tasks of knowledge and of action, seek to deceive themselves about their true position by reflections on preservation, resolution, and existential attitudes; or they retreat before the objective world, which has become meaningless for them, into the "beyond" of an unobjectifiability, which is then again filled in with the contents, apparently lying "beyond theory and practice," of an aesthetic-contemplative, occasionally also religiously colored conception of life.

VI

Thus existential philosophy like cosmic metaphysics is an interpretation of man and world out of a particular social situation. In the latter, reality is conceived according to the model of security found in the rational order of a stable society; in the former, according to the experience of insecurity and perplexity of cultural groups become socially homeless in a time of strong social displacements. In all scientific criticism of these doctrines, however, it must not be forgotten that it is precisely the theoretically untenable element in them that constitutes their vital power and practical significance.

Man will always strive for a total evaluative orientation in the

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world, and everyday speech will always be the most important instrument for such an orientation. This entwinement of knowledge and value is often created by the great human institutions and in its turn strengthens them. Therefore those powers mistrust the separation of reality and value, which allows the "truth" taught by them to appear as one among many possible world views. Yet it is precisely in its institutional crystallization that the peculiarity of practical human rule and of its specific instruments is clearly distinguished from all scientific investigation of facts: what rules is not the indicative, but the imperative. Not confirmation in experience, but authoritative decision within, victory or defeat without, are here the final criteria. Deviating doctrines are not tested for their objective foundation, instead they are prejudged and where possible excluded altogether: even the mere doubting of the necessary principles is already regarded as reprehensible. The social structure of such systems is to a large extent independent of the world view which they serve or which serves them, and the most extreme ideological opponents have nearly identical social structures. It is obvious that the fate of institutionalized philosophies depends on the fates of the societies which bear them and not on scientific results.

The union of its members through a rational and objectivistic metaphysics basically superior to all preferences, experiences and subjective beliefs of individuals corresponds best to institutional systems in their struggle for self-assertion. On the other hand, the life situation of floating intellectuals, displaced from immediate practical tasks, favors an individual and often even sublime striving for redemption. The vision of the value-free and irrational character of the cosmic process and of the conceptual untenability of previous metaphysical constructions combines with the loss of ties to objective aims and social arrangements to form a specific experience of meaninglessness. Under the pressure of this objectless "dread," which is often united with unadmitted fear of concrete threats and various experiences of inadequacy, man seeks a last hold in an indeterminate inwardness. This plasticity, like the emptiness of the tautologies, has contributed essentially to the success of the movement. Sometimes an illusory world of objectless acts, which only veils the flight from real action—corresponding to the illusory object world of an hypostatizing metaphysics—has been constructed in the name of existence. Sometimes

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action has been preached for action's sake. Sometimes the existentialist attitude turns against all objective authorities in the form of bohemian anarchism—often misunderstood as communism. Sometimes existential dread, as substitute for the fear of hell fire, is supposed to move us to return to the redeeming community of the church. And, finally, literati, since the Second World War could avail themselves of slogans like "dread," "nothing," "failure."

Here, obviously, our theme reaches out beyond strict theory. The interpretations of the life situations which again and again are poured into the empty formulae of philosophy—and even more the forms of actual vital order—no one can decide on finally in the name of knowledge alone. This decision can only come from an ethic, which, not to be blind, has need of knowledge. Thus, the critical illumination of deeply rooted misunderstandings and the clear calculation of the difficulties of our own position may strengthen a disposition of wakefulness and watchfulness, which refuses even in the hour of need to betray itself to authority or esotericism.

1 For this problem cf. E. Topitsch: "Der Humanismus und seine Ueberwindung," *Wiener Zeitschrift fuer Philosophie, Psychologie, Paedagogik,* IV/2, 1952, p. 96 ff.

2 Ludwig Wittgenstein: *Tractatus logico-philosophicus,* 6.52. R. Carnap: *Der logische Aufbau der Welt.* Berlin 1928, p. 262.

3 O. F. Bollnow, *Existenzphilosophie,* 3rd ed., Stuttgart 1949, p. 11.

4 L. Binswanger, *Grundformen und Erkenntnis menschlichen Daseins,* Zürich 1942, p. 446.

5 M. Heidegger, *Was ist Metaphysik?* 4th ed., Frankfurt am Main 1943, p. 17.

6 F. J. v. Rintelen: *Philosophie der Endlichkeit als Spiegel der Gegenwart,* Meisenheim 1951, p. 168. The quotations are from M. Heidegger, *Ueber den Humanismus,* Frankfurt am Main 1949, p. 6, 9, 7.

7 M. Heidegger: *Holzwege,* 2nd ed., Frankfurt am Main 1952, p. 271. *Humanismus,* p. 22. *Holzwege,* p. 247. *Humanismus,* p. 15-16. *Holzwege,* p. 291-4.

8 *Humanismus,* p. 42-5.

9 Rintelen, *op. cit.,* p. 168, 293. F. Heinemann: "Was ist lebendig und was ist tot in der Existenzphilosophie?" *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung,* 1950/I, p. 13-14.

10 *Holzwege,* p. 195.

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Spencer Brown

MY FATHER'S BUSINESS

By day keeping bleak books, by night my father
Wrote black manna-words for snowy newspapers
Dawn-fresh, noon-gray, by evening trash,
So I might in my youth read other books
That his untutored years could not translate.
Though my life slew him, yet he trusted me.
Now in mid-journey I cannot jettison
His legacy, hidden, heavy, unlikely,
His twig of laurel borne in hope of need.
My friends, who long since lost theirs, go ungalled
By the ugly itch and running sore, renown.
But my new eyes still focus as a stranger's,
See trees as men talking, stars as bombs.
And though I understand your speech, good friends,
And without speech the shudder of your dreams,
I cannot know you: no abhorrèd shears,
Only a sword lies between you and life.
If I tread on earth unguessed at, bitter so.
And if almost beyond hope my white ghost
Marvels at the next age's marble praise,
And another in language not too unlike mine,
Untwists my lines to say in remote love,
"Such is thy song to me, divine poet"—
Nevertheless I write past the noon of man
And my words will, like my father's, blow about
The windy streets or desert slag at nightfall.
I use a language he cannot translate
Or even hear, not if I had bronze lungs,
A hundred mouths, and a hundred thousand tongues.

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Emma Swan

SOCIAL STUDIES

What an abyss of misery is his lot
Who knows too well to whom he talks of what,

Addressing sonnets to a narcissist,
Soliloquys to a deaf-mute moralist

And sermons to absentee-owners of
Themselves who say they give their lives to love

Because they look at it through fluctuations
Of seasonal and produce delimitations:

Statisticians at heart. Look deeper:
The electrical nightmare that wakens the sleeper

Is not addressed to those who idolize
Images or numbers, and it would be wise,

If summoned from depths unspeculated upon,
To rise to a shining world and declare it one.

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Nicola Chiaromonte

RETURN TO FONTAMARA

If the term "socialist realism" made any sense Ignazio Silone would be the only contemporary writer to whom it could be applied. For Silone is a "realist" through his exclusive attachment to the community of *cafoni* (peasants) which no matter how often he changes its name remains the Fontamara of his first book. "Realist," too, is the simplicity of his narration, good-natured and sardonic in the peasant style; and again in the peasant style, seeking its effects by allusions and sudden silences rather than by subtleties, rejecting any complexity that cannot be translated into simple words. Silone continually prefers crudity to preciousness; it pleases him more to appear sentimental than to pass for "intelligent."

As for Silone's "socialism" it consists entirely of his recollection of the intricate reality of peasant life, which contains, as an integral and daily part, the need for justice and the hope that the reign of superior force will some day cease. Silone associates himself with this need and this hope, and compared to them cares little for anything else: political parties, ideologies, governments. He cares least of all about "changes," as he calls them, which he measures by what they alter in Fontamara: that is, practically nothing.

But all this is a bit too simple. It neglects the fact that Silone's realism is essentially ironic and his socialism staunchly religious, if by religion we understand a quest and a passion for the enduring—for something beyond appearances and "changes." Properly speaking, therefore, Silone is concerned neither with realism nor with socialism but with moral truth and with hope. He does not admire the world of the *cafoni*; on the contrary, he finds it pitiable and grotesque. He knows very well that the people of Fontamara have been left behind by the course of events, and are on the point of being forgotten, if not heedlessly dispersed. Nevertheless, they remain his point of reference, his touchstone, his exemplars, not because they are endowed with virtues superior to those of city dwellers, but because, by their sheer presence, by having endured and remained entirely themselves, poor, ignorant and abandoned, they place everything else in doubt—history, civilization,

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government, churches, ideological constructions. The truth of the *cafoni* is rustic and inarticulate. But they remain and everything else changes; they are composed of necessity, all else of doubt and chance. Their truth has no value outside their isolated communities where nothing foreign to them can influence them; it is a monotonous truth, stubborn, self-enclosed, expressible only through irony. And it is this irony that Silone explains and develops in the form of novels.

To take Silone for a regional writer would be a crude simplification. He began to write not in order to describe his native Abruzzi but because he wished to assess for himself and for others what remained of the socialist faith once the hope of realizing it through state power had been crushed by events. Nor was Silone ever just an "anti-Fascist" writer; from the beginning he has been a socialist writer, or better, a writer *about* socialism. He was a refugee from Mussolini's Italy, but especially from the Communist Party and Stalin's Russia—from the International, in the full meaning of the word. This made him from the very start an eminently cosmopolitan writer. And that is probably why he was better understood abroad than in Italy where the full import of the Communist question was not realized until recently. Of all the refugees from Communism, Silone is the only one who has remained faithful to the original problem, that is, the transformation of the world according to justice, and more concretely, the redemption of the poor. The same cannot be said of Arthur Koestler, for whom the question of Communism has been ideological from the first: a debate of the modern intellectual with himself (and this is how Koestler handles it). Neither can it be said of George Orwell, who ended in the Swiftian misanthropy of *Animal Farm* and in the universal nausea of *1984*.

Certainly we may say that it was the memory of the Abruzzi peasants that kept Silone from the quagmire of abstract arguments, the battles of sects and splinter groups, in short from the typical desperation of the contemporary intellectual. Essentially it was the contrast between the mechanism of Soviet bureaucracy and the reality of communal living that impelled him to throw Communism overboard. But there is more than that. Once the conflict arose, Silone never for a moment indulged in the abstractions of political ideology; never for a moment did he appeal from the ill-informed Party to the well-informed Party. His choice was not between the Church and heresy but between the Church and "the substance of things hoped for"; to believe and remain in the Church was henceforth impossible, since faith was now replaced by orthodoxy and orthodoxy has need not of faith but of obedience.

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The conflict between Communist orthodoxy and socialist faith appeared to Silone as both simple and fundamental. It was not a conflict between opposing political arguments but between ideology and everyday reality, between hierarchy and society, between the functionaries of a far-away power and the *cafoni.* If the ideology were true, then the reality would be false; if the hierarchy were infallible, the society of the oppressed would be in error; if the instructions of the functionaries expressed a superior truth, then the very existence of the *cafoni* would be an obstinate "deviation." The contrast, finally, was so simple and absolute that it became comic. And from this contrast springs Silone's irony: "Was the life of Fontamara, then, *less* real than the historical process?"

If one had to answer "yes" then one would find one's self on well-trodden ground, since princes and popes, ministers and *duci,* tax collectors and representatives of order had always maintained the same principle, namely, that the *cafoni* are wrong by nature; and now the great Communist Party was catching up with these venerable institutions, demonstrating once again how right the peasants were to place little faith in "changes." But if the answer was "no," then in spite of everything it was still permissible to hope and believe.

It was not Silone's purpose to exalt these "primitives." Rather, he wished to show how deficient modern faiths and superstitions were, how comically abstract the order they proposed, if they failed not only to revive but even to affect this abandoned community, disfigured and petrified by time. The *cafoni* are grotesque; but how much more grotesque is an "historical" world in which the life of the *cafoni,* their rites and customs, worn out by habit and repetition and never revitalized—remains as an example of moral truth?

It is Silone's great merit that he has known how to recall in the context of today's struggles the existence of this immemorial reality, a reality that should cause the modern world to question its pride, and at the same time give it reasons for not despairing. This is Silone's value as a writer; and it is by no means a purely literary one.

Rather than novels, Silone's books are apologues and moral fables. Their theme and their style are those of an educated peasant who speaks so as to be understood by other peasants. Therefore he must explain himself through homely and familiar examples; if he wishes to move his audience he must do so in a manner which they understand. Indeed, there is something of the country priest about Silone, a priest without hierarchical fetters and without theology—free, imaginative and rustic, as much by birth as by deliberate choice.

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In *Fontamara,* to explain what Fascism was, or rather what the relation was between the state and the *cafoni,* Silone used the example of the brook closed to the village people by the despotic Prince Torlonia. In *Bread and Wine* the question was the relation between the Party with its dogmas and "slogans," and peasant life. Silone illustrated this with the journey of Pietro Spina, militant Communist, through his native countryside and his encounters with the local "dead souls" plus a few living men. When his journey was over the dogmas and slogans had vanished without leaving a trace, leaving him only a fidelity to the people and the land. In *The Seed Beneath the Snow* Silone sought to find once again an expressive symbol for his hope, and he imagined it ironically in the figure of the dumb *cafone* and his donkey. But in reality he had no need to search for a symbol; it had always existed in the peasant community. In his latest book the theme is simply the permanence, amidst all the changes, of this tenacious society—the congruence of its customs compared to the incongruence of any present or future bureaucratic order.

This essential theme is developed by Silone with a calm assurance that makes of *A Handful of Blackberries,*[1] his new book, his most dense and significant apologue. To the principal theme Silone wished to add a description of the habits and customs of the Communist Party; and he does so in the story of the clash between the Party members Rocco and Stella on the one side, and the machine of the post-Fascist Communist Party on the other. For more than one reader this story will be plausible, but ultimately of secondary interest. The clash that truly excites Silone is not the one between the Party (which is certainly in the wrong) and the heretics (who are right only insofar as they reject the Party), but rather between the senseless artifices of the hierarchy and the incorruptible simplicity of collective hopes—a simplicity that is the reflection of the law that rules all things.

In *A Handful of Blackberries* Silone's plot has the same simplicity as the one he chose for *Fontamara.* Here he writes of the forest which more than a century ago belonged to the community, but which through trickery came into the possession of the Tarocchi family. The *cafoni* have never forgotten this, and since then have always measured the reality of the "changes" that have taken place by what has happened to the Tarocchi woodland. Nothing happened to the woodland throughout a hundred years; it remained securely in the hands of the Tarocchi. The "changes" then have changed nothing. Nor, in this respect is the "change" that took place after the fall of Fascism different from any

1 Harpers. $3.50.

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other. Thus the *cafoni* did not deem it necessary to honor this event by bringing out of hiding the trumpet which before Fascism they had used for summoning the village to meetings to talk over some collective action. Under Fascism the trumpet had been carefully concealed; now the Communists want this symbolic trumpet, declaring themselves its legitimate inheritors. But how can they be the legitimate inheritors when, for reasons of their own, they have deemed it expedient to come to terms with the Tarocchi family? Therefore, after having briefly reappeared during an ephemeral and anarchic occupation of the disputed land, the trumpet once more is placed in hiding.

"And how long will it be before it comes out again?" the ex-Communist Stella at the end of the book asks Lazzaro, the leader of the resisting *cafoni*. "How am I supposed to know?" Lazzaro answers. "It doesn't depend on me. Maybe in one year, or twenty, or five hundred." But Stella is not accustomed to trust things that endure. "Have you never thought," says Lazzaro, "that something guides the path of ants underground and the flight of birds from one continent to another?" "Are you really sure there is something?" Stella demands. "I am not sure at all." "It seems to me," Lazzaro answers, "that it's not so important to know it with certainty. Even he who doesn't know, goes where he has to go. . . ."

This is the conclusion of the book, the moral of *A Handful of Blackberries,* the moral of Silone's return to Fontamara. And it is easy to say that the moral is not a new one. Silone, however, speaks not for the "knowing" but as a peasant to peasants. For him it is far more important to rediscover the meaning of ancient "commonplaces" than to discover novelties. His search is for what endures. As for that which changes, Silone would not concede that very much has changed in the world since the coming of Christ, except the desiccation of his "good news" and the hope of a new revelation.

(*Translated from the Italian by Joseph Frank*)

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THEATER CHRONICLE

PLEASURES AND PAINS OF PLAYGOING

The last play I saw, prior to this season, was *Harvey*. The role of Ellwood P. Dowd was interpreted by Bert Wheeler. I have not been able to forget that evening, though I have tried. It was not Bert Wheeler who made it memorable but a foreign gentleman, a Frenchman, one of our party, the new husband of a charming young woman of my acquaintance. He said that the drunkenness of Americans was not funny, and with this we could only agree. He further said that we, in America, were given to the most childish forms of fantasy and kindergarten amusements, and much more to this effect which we took to heart and discussed with great gravity and unconscious annoyance. Everything that is said about us we are compelled to discuss. I was soon out of temper; Toffenetti's cake lost its taste, the coffee grew cold and the party became tense. I felt that the gods were unjust, and that *Harvey* and the French critic were more than one should be asked to bear in a single evening. And the strawberry shortcake! And Broadway after the theater! In my anger at the inescapable conventionality of situation after situation I resolved—since I was fond of the young lady who had married the Frenchman—that I had to choose between the theater and my friends, and so for a time I gave up Broadway altogether.

This season I became a playgoer once again. The following is my report of what I have seen.

To anticipate a criticism, I am not a highbrow, though I do not disclaim intelligence, and I do not go to the theater in quest of ideas but to be diverted, delighted, awed, and in search of opportunities to laugh and to cry. I do not feel that I ask too much and yet every time I go to the theater I find that my expectations are about as realistic as a high-school girl's visions of love and marriage. The actors seem to have no notion of play. I don't know why. Is it too frivolous to play in the theater? Does it lead to disrespect of their theories? The behavior of the actors is very businesslike. But of course the whole enterprise is serious. Backer, producer, director, technician, trade unionist, all are engaged in protecting investment, job and livelihood. Also, serious people do not idle away their time—I am speaking now of the pleasure-seekers of the audience. No one should pretend to exhaust any mystery

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in a few words and I don't think there is any brief and comprehensive way to account for audiences. They come to improve their hours, to be in the swim, to embrace a cultural occasion, to show their clothes and see the clothes of other people, to furnish their minds, to receive moral instruction. And, it is one of my favorite theories, to test their powers of resistance to emotion. My mother used to go to the theater or to the pictures in order to have a good cry, but we appear to have changed all that and somehow prefer a test of our powers to demonstrations of our weaknesses. My observations possibly mislead me, but everywhere I see people testing to find whether they can eat without tasting, view without suffering, make love without feeling and exist between winning and losing in an even state of potentiality. Theaters are very good testing stations.

The first play I saw this season was *Take a Giant Step,* whose hero, a young Negro on the threshold of manhood, is assisted through the portal by an older woman. Everyone understands his sexual initiation is necessary and all, except his mother, are helpful and sympathetic. The theme of tender help extended by an older woman to a distressed boy is highly popular on Broadway this season. *Tea and Sympathy,* which I have not seen, celebrates the same form of loving-kindness. The satisfaction derived by the audience from *Take a Giant Step* is undoubtedly a moral one; tolerance, enlightenment, sympathy for the adolescent in his first sexual crisis, broad-mindedness, considerations of social welfare and of hygiene—on these the appeal of the play rested.

Calder Willingham's *End as a Man,* adapted by the author from his amusing novel, fascinated me in the early part of the first act by its sophisticated violence. The fits of rage into which the terrible Jocko de Paris fell were truly impressive. But they degenerated soon into merely childish tantrums, straining the ingenuity of Ben Gazzara who was offered no hints by the author as to how to vary them. Jocko promises at first to develop into a sort of military-academy Stavrogin, but he ends as a super Katzenjammer kid.

I come now to a play which almost sent me back to the conversation of my French friend, T. S. Eliot's *The Confidential Clerk.* It cost the playgoer six bucks to see this one. Of course it is not Mr. Eliot's fault that unscrupulous Broadway people produce his plays, but I did expect to learn, at this price, what ways lie open to a man who has emerged from the dark night of the soul. I was sorely disappointed. *The Confidential Clerk* is Mr. Eliot's version of *The Importance of Being Earnest,* the element of farce removed, replaced with something more intellectual. Not a tear. It remains a comedy. Yet there is very

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little laughter in it. The play is pervaded by a sort of emotional albinism hard to characterize. Children find their parents and parents their children without a flicker of feeling. It may be that I am not responsive to an unusually dry variety of modern English humor. "I should like to know how I ought to address you/Lady Elizabeth," says young Mr. Kaghan who has at last found his real mother, "I've always been accustomed/to regard Mrs. Kaghan as my mother."

LADY ELIZABETH: *Then in order to avoid any danger of confusion*
You may address me as Aunt Elizabeth.

B. KAGHAN: *That's easier, certainly.*

LADY ELIZ.: *And I shall wish to meet them,*
Claude, we must invite the Kaghans to dinner.

SIR CLAUDE: *By all means, Elizabeth.*

You can't beat this for playing it cool. Arms by their sides, perfectly self-possessed, making no gesture toward one another, the relatives trip through their verses. Imagine Neapolitans or Russians or Jews in this situation. But this impressive demonstration of self-command made me wonder whether anything so close to death was really suitable to dramatic representation and, also, why this aridity of the British character should be admired and associated with culture or religion. Better observers than I have complained of it: John Stuart Mill, for instance, in the chapter of his *Autobiography* called "A Crisis in My Mental History." It is not easy to explain why one should go to the old world in search of qualities that were so often the despair of those who could not avoid them and why Englishmen should have fled from them to Italy and Arabia whereas Americans have seen salvation in being, as Matthew Arnold described it, three parts iced over.

Restrained and unassuming, as plain in dialogue as it is undemonstrative in its drama, *The Confidential Clerk* nevertheless is not a simple play. Audiences and readers are wiser than they used to be. They know that everything simple is not *really* simple. The barest of statements refers the mind to something profound. Jack and Jill can no more be merely Jack and Jill than Moby Dick can be nothing but a whale. Critics have proved to us that mythological and religious entities inhabit ordinary Midwestern personalities. Passengers descending from streetcars illustrate the *Reisemotiv*. Little boys in Mississippi are really Aeneas. Decidedly, things are not what they seem. Elvire thinks that Tartuffe is feeling her thigh, but he murmurs, "*Quelle merveilleuse étoffe.*" Now what is stuff but another name for substance? Elvire is perhaps deceived. A simple act is not what the naive eye takes in. But there are at

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least two possible interpretations. And one may take the attitude of Elvire who, as a woman, ought to know what it is to have her thigh felt, or the attitude of Tartuffe. Tartuffe has many followers in the literary world.

Mr. Eliot's plain lines are intended to lead the spectator's mind into purer realities. But is this intention enough, and are we not also entitled to passion, or even to diversion? If Mr. Eliot says, as I think he does, that our earthly fathers and mothers do not matter so much has he entirely discharged his duties as a dramatist? These parents and children renounce very little because they desire very little, and desiring very little they cannot interest us very much. It is odd, by the way, that the coldest, the very coldest of these personages, Colby, should be the one drawn to the Church. Is it because he is humanly the most impossible? Is the author trying to tell us that the good Christian is he who is freeest from the bonds of this world? Are the very best, then, *in articulo mortis?* This is very strange for so young a man as Colby. I should have liked to see him desiring, striving, deserving his wisdom. He might at least have tried aerial photography or playing the piano for a fan-dancer, first. Instead, in pious imitation of his earthly father, he will play the organ badly all his life and this will put him on better terms with his Heavenly Father. Somehow it doesn't seem altogether right.

My news of the theater is not wholly discouraging. In the Village I saw three plays which gave me the strength to continue my investigations on Broadway. At the Cabaret Theater a small company with very few props brilliantly played Sartre's *No Exit.* The play had not impressed me deeply when I read it. "Hell," Shelley wrote, "is a city much like London." For Sartre it is a city much like Paris, a Paris of lesbians, nymphomaniacs and collaborationists, of smelly rooms and endless conversations. If I must end in such a hell I can at least, while still alive, read about better ones. But on the stage, superbly directed by Theodore Hoffman, the play was exciting. Mr. Hoffman refused to let the philosophical element devour the theatrical, and Sartre for all of his philosophizing does have a sense of theater. Not even his stubbornest admirers can read his novels, but his plays can, as Mr. Hoffman has just shown, be stirring.

In the Artists' Theater on Bleecker Street I spent two of my happiest evenings as a playgoer. I saw two new comedies there which deserved much more attention than they have so far received. The first was a one-act play by Lionel Abel called *The Death of Odysseus.* This is a rather French play with an old Odysseus in the role of *raisonneur,* very

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magnetic, very witty, worldly, candid and philosophical. A son of his by Circe, a son of whose existence he had hitherto been unaware, lands on Ithaca, defeats his father's soldiers and challenges him to single combat. Odysseus tries to get Telemachus to do his fighting for him but he is thwarted by a jealous Penelope and in the end goes to his death at the hands of this son whom he has never before seen.Mr. Abel's wonderfully intelligent and charming play has only one fault, it presents no character who can rival Odysseus, and he has things too much his own way, dominating the entire stage and soliloquizing now from this corner and now from that. The other characters are sometimes *de trop*.

Those who like to put their powers of resistance to the greatest test ought to have seen Robert Hivnor's comedy *The Ticklish Acrobat* at the Artists' Theater. That would have given them a run for their money. In the chaos of conflicting opinions and values that surrounds us the vocabulary of praise and gratitude has been torn to tatters and I do not know how to give Mr. Hivnor his due more than to say that he is the real thing, a writer. I don't know how he has managed to survive; it must take skillful management and great courage. The matter ought to be inquired into.

Here is a résumé of the plot: A young American woman in love with culture and tradition has come to an ancient and shabby town on the Adriatic. Her uncle, some sort of American official, has at her urging tried to bring some relief to the depressed little town but he has been able to do no more than to interest an archaeologist in its history. That proves to be enough. The American archaeologist begins to peel off the centuries. He finds the nineteenth century fortress, the Venetian garrison, the Roman town, the Greek colony. The townspeople daily recapitulate their history; they change; they are filled with energy, awakened from their depressed sleep. The ticklish acrobat of the title is a young girl, the daughter of a family which for centuries has been dedicated to the practice of ritual gymnastics. They are tumblers and aerialists. A young American flyer who was shot down over the town during the war, as he was floating earthward in his parachute met this young woman flying through the air at her devotions. He fell in love with her, and she is also in love with him. Unfortunately she is ticklish, now, and whether it is Joe Zanelli the American or her father or her uncle who reaches for her she begins to laugh. Sadly, she can take nothing seriously, neither love nor religion. Her furious father blames the American, this barbarian who threatens all tradition with annihilation. Meanwhile our archaeologist is leveling the town. He is not in the least interested in his Roman or Greek discoveries. He has seen all that before,

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and he aims to pull down the pillars and proceed, dig ever deeper. Though he is mild enough in appearance, a sort of Hoosier Harold Lloyd, he bears in his breast a relentless American spirit. He wants to undo history, or to purify mankind of its past, and he speaks of bringing in a bulldozer to scrape off the "overlay" and root out the most ancient germs of the past. But the young American woman captures and marries him. And young Zanelli cures and wins the ticklish acrobat and the story ends with a reconciliation—of a kind.

The actors responded to this enchanting play as I have never yet seen Broadway actors respond. They played it with love and carried the audience away. There were no bored faces here; everyone looked happy. Later, I am sure, the spectators thought about love and history, ritual and religion, but that was in continuation of their pleasure, and they did not have to suffer the pains of culture-anxiety or agonies of ignorance, wondering which sip of the cocktail represented the eucharist.

I shall be astonished if Mr. Hivnor's play does not very soon reach a larger audience. I ought not to be astonished. I am old enough to know better. But the world can't be utterly unjust and perhaps some backer will rouse himself and strike a blow at last against boredom and bad art. Is there no hope for people with capital?

Saul Bellow

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BOOKS

MONSTROUS DUST

LETTERS TO MILENA. By Franz Kafka. Edited by Willy Haas. Translated by Tania and James Stern. Schocken Books. $3.75.

The recipient of these letters was Milena Jesenká, the "M" of Kafka's later diaries. With her he corresponded at length in the early stages of a love affair which began in 1920 and lasted for some two years. He was very ill with consumption at the time; and after his death, in 1924, Milena preserved his letters, entrusting them to Willy Haas on the eve of the German invasion of Czechoslovakia. Her part in the correspondence has not survived and she herself died in a Nazi concentration camp. Mr. Haas, who tells her story in the introduction to this volume, knew her well, as he had also known Kafka. He seems to have planned the book as a memorial to her.

She belonged, he writes, to a notable burgher family of Prague; and though Kafka was a native of the same city, he does not appear to have been acquainted with her there. Milena was of a younger generation and had been caught up "in the erotic and intellectual promiscuity of the Viennese literary café society in the wild years after 1918." Even in that setting she was a rarity: "passionate, intrepid," "a character such as Stendhal lifted out of the old Italian chronicles." When Kafka first knew her, Milena was twenty-four and lived in Vienna with a husband from whom she thought of separating. She taught school, wrote for the magazines, admired Stevenson as well as Dostoevsky, and had been quick to see the genius of Kafka's few published stories. She had undertaken to translate his *Metamorphosis* into Czech, and it was while corresponding about this project that they discovered one another.

To reconstruct the affair in its external developments would be tedious, if not impossible, in the present state of the letters. This the editor admits to be quite tentative. Mostly undated, often unclear in their allusions to events and people, supplied with a minimum of editorial notes, and occasionally deleted "out of consideration for persons still alive," the letters must be read as a mere monologue. It hardly matters. So far as one can make out, "our relationship," as Kafka (or the translators) drearily term it, was probably poor in event. Kafka and

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Milena rarely met, and as Mr. Haas remarks, "their love was essentially a letter-love, like the love of Kierkegaard or Werther."

Not quite. Kafka was more enterprising than Kierkegaard, not to mention Werther. When he and Milena did meet, it was almost certainly to go to bed. Neither his diaries nor the present letters makes any secret of his fierce intermittent sensuality. This, he tells Milena, "had something in it of the eternal Jew, wandering senselessly through a senselessly obscene world." And although the affair looked hopeless from the start, neither of them abandoned it without a moral struggle as fierce as the sensuality. At first Kafka is tempted: he is eager for some permanent union. But before long he is writing, "we never can or will live together." His reasons are many: he is a Jew as she is not, he is too old, too sick, and anyway she is only "dazzled" by his writings. Conceivably, his very passion for her is generated by his mortal illness and despair. If he "belongs to her," it is by virtue of "this whole monstrous dust which 38 years have kicked up and which has settled in my lungs." She on her side combats and derides his scruples but cannot prevail against the monstrous dust, which is his accumulated experience of tragedy. She must remain his "angel of death."

They had, besides, a number of lesser misunderstandings. They brought into the affair too many of their friends. Kafka induces Milena to correspond with Max Brod: they fail to hit it off. Milena asks Kafka to hunt up in Prague an old acquaintance of hers named Jarmila: the issue is doubtful. Some acrimony is created by a mysterious mission which Milena has urged him to undertake and which she thinks he has bungled. Meanwhile there is Ernest, Milena's husband, toward whom Kafka is oddly propitiatory, not only because Ernest is a rival but because he is that—to Kafka—enviable thing, a Husband. Finally there is "the girl," Kafka's fiancée of several months (the "J.W." of the diaries), whom he is trying to break with: the girl also writes to Milena. Thinking of Milena, her husband and himself, Kafka describes the situation as "*torture à trois,*" but he seems to have miscounted.

And indeed love, their love, is constantly represented by Kafka as a disastrous experience. For Milena it will mean "to leap into an abyss"; for him she is "the knife which I turn within myself." Kafka's ambivalent feeling for love and marriage is well known. It had, at this point, brought him failure in three major campaigns (the one engagement to "J.W.", the two separate engagements to "F.B."), and he was becoming intensely conscious of himself as a veteran with many wounds and no trophies. "Sisyphus was a bachelor," he noted in his diaries during those years. In the case of Milena, however, one suspects that special irritants were at work and that her being young, romantic,

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gentile, impelled him to a peculiar vehemence. He wants, perhaps, to divest her of her illusions about life. So she is spared nothing of his situation—past, present and to come. His oppressive father, his cruel childhood, his "obscene" sexual history, his mortal thinness of body, his insomnia, his coughing fits, his dreams—all are made to contribute to her enlightenment. Increasingly, he reminds her of his Jewishness. "This means, expressed with exaggeration, that not one calm second is granted me, nothing is granted me, everything has to be earned." "My nature is: Fear." At one moment Prague is full of Jewish refugees from revolutionary Russia and there are anti-Semitic riots in the streets. He spends an entire afternoon among the demonstrators, "wallowing" in the spectacle. And on this occasion his cries are dreadful to overhear, like those of a man in the embrace of a nightmare. As Mr. Haas observes, for Kafka the "love of a non-Jew was evidently a serious, tragic problem."

Yes, but all of life tended to become such a problem for him. The inescapable unity of his experience was his despair, his joke and his glory. His candor in expressing, in *feeling*, his situation as a Jew was like a fire in which that situation got refined of all local, temporal, special considerations and so came to serve his great primary art. "Out of the quarrel with ourselves, we make poetry," in Yeats's phrase. Elsewhere in the letters, at calmer moments, he writes about his people in a spirit which has little to do with Milena, much to do with his mind and art. "The insecure position of Jews, insecure within themselves, insecure among people, would make it above all comprehensible that they consider themselves to be allowed to own only what they hold in their hands or between their teeth, that furthermore only palpable possessions give them the right to live, and that they will never acquire what they once have lost but that instead it calmly swims away from them forever." A similar paradox gives energy to Kafka's fiction, in which man in general is shown as holding life "between his teeth" in return for the insecurity of his spiritual existence. And this conception, which distinguishes Kafka from Kierkegaard no less than from Eliot (for whom religion is so much a matter of "belief," and unbelief is so often associated with mere debility), Kafka owes to the tradition of Moses, Job and Ruth. His unique place among the great recent writers consists in his bringing that tradition to bear on the preoccupations of modernity.

There are in the *Letters to Milena* other evidences of the Kafka who had written *The Trial* and was soon to write *The Castle*. These, however, are mostly evidences of his general mind and style, rarely of his opinions or his reading. For all his distress, he usually sustains a

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good-humored composure: certainly it is often humorous, a kind of intricate teasing. Here as in his stories he keeps to the imponderable line between horror and farce, the physical and the spiritual, the intensely personal and the brilliantly impersonal. Even his macabre jokes at the expense of the Jews recall Swift's "A Modest Proposal," which he knew. For the rest, one constantly surprises his invention at its characteristic work. Milena's husband, whom he used to see in the Prague cafés, had "the peculiarity of being called to the telephone several times during the evening. Presumably there must have been someone who, instead of sleeping, sat by the telephone dozing, his head on the back of his chair, and who sat up from time to time to call him." The letters abound in anecdote, parable, paradox (a little too much of this last). The entire experience with Milena is thus translated into Kafka's animated moral idiom—as he says, "rearranged for my orchestra." (The effects are probably much attenuated in English although the translation sounds convincing).

But it would be to take an intolerably high line with these letters to assert that the humor and eloquence relieve the impression of suffering. That impression is indelible; and to our present age, with its cult of the reconstructed ego and the busy life, Kafka's letters will come as intrusive reminders of the lost art of being unhappy. This art, which one may call the art of introspection, gives Kafka his peculiar authority in suffering. It permits him to see his own life in something like its entirety and to connect it, by way of observation and myth, with the life of everyone. It is with more than authority, with pride, that he says to Milena: "I believe I understand the Fall of Man as no else."

F. W. Dupee

THE IMITATION OF LIFE

MIMESIS. By Erich Auerbach. Translated by Willard Trask. Princeton University Press. $7.50.

Mimesis, which essays nothing less than a study of the representation of reality in Western European literature since the time of the Greeks, was written in Istanbul during the war years, where very little scholarly or critical material was available. With few exceptions, Auerbach had to depend simply on the texts of the works themselves. This is his preferred method under any circumstances, however, and it kept him from getting lost in the vast exegetical literature under which most of the writers he treats are buried.

In the manner with which Leo Spitzer has already made us ac-

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quainted, Auerbach begins his discussion of any work by explicating very thoroughly one or two short passages, often selected almost at random. This is not the explication of the New Critics, however, bearing down hard on verbal ambiguities, thematic images, and symbols. Auerbach is primarily interested in syntax, style, and reference. From the references and their paratactic or hypotactic ordering, from the logic and rhythm of the development, Auerbach infers the author's sense of external reality, partly personal, partly determined by his class and period. This world-view Auerbach reconstructs or recovers from the passages he quotes, aided by his vast, particular and precisely qualified knowledge of literature and history.

Such analysis of style, called *Stilforschung,* has been prominent in German criticism since before the First World War, and strangely neglected in English and American criticism, especially of fiction. We possess separate studies of the styles of major American novelists, but no serious comparative or historical works which attempt to place the styles culturally in their American context. Joseph Warren Beach's tentative beginning in *The Outlook for American Prose* (1926) has not been followed up.

Auerbach began his study in reaction to Plato's view of art. The tenth book of the *Republic* argues that imitative art is completely divorced from the truth, is an imperfect reflection of an imperfect reflection, and hence at two removes from reality. Auerbach opposed to this Dante's assertion that the *Commedia* represented true reality, and he opposed it also with his own strong admiration for Stendhal and Balzac. These novelists "took random individuals from daily life in their dependence upon current historical circumstances and made them the subjects of serious, problematic, and even tragic representation." Stendhal, Balzac and Flaubert broke completely with the classic and neo-classic theories of separation of styles, which assigned to different kinds of social reality their appropriate styles. Since the styles, according to these theories, could not be mixed, kinds of reality were kept separate in art, or excluded from it. Everyday reality could be dealt with only in a low, comic style, or a sentimental or unserious one.

Auerbach was aware, of course, that these doctrines were accepted only in certain periods, and that literary realism did not begin in the French nineteenth century. He set out, using texts already well known to him, and without preconceptions so far as this theme was concerned, to discover to what degree and in what manner realistic subjects were treated seriously, problematically, or tragically, in the historic development of Western literature.

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He begins by contrasting the narrative styles of the *Odyssey* and Genesis. In the *Odyssey* everything is completely externalized and set squarely in the foreground. Temporal and spatial relations are clear and logical. Nothing is left half dark or unexternalized. In the Old Testament, on the contrary, much is unsyntactical, fragmentary, unexplained, relevance merely implied, actors' thoughts left unexpressed. In Homer meaningful life is enacted only among the ruling class, and even for them it is not problematic in any existential or philosophic sense. Biblical prophecy, on the other hand, springs from the "irrepressible politico-religious spontaneity of the people." In the Old Testament, the sublime, tragic, and problematic abide precisely in the domestic and commonplace.

The Bible describes a providential historical development, as does the *Aeneid*. But Vergil has none of the homely, classless realism of the Scriptures, or the realism of Dante who "knows no limits in describing with meticulous care and directness things which are humdrum, grotesque, or repulsive." Dante can introduce the line, "and let them scratch wherever they itch" in one of the most solemn passages of the *Paradiso*. The Roman novelists and historians, Petronius, Tacitus, and Ammianus, were realistic in producing sharply observed or imagined particulars of actual experience, but they had no sense of the problematic or tragic. "The limits of ancient realism mark limits of historic consciousness as well." Historiography in depth, Auerbach says, was unknown to antiquity.

Christian realism, for Auerbach, is "creatural" and "figural." All individuals are created by God and derive their meaning from Him. Even when they are not shown fully in horizontal relationships, historically and socially, they are not isolated. They "figure" in the vast drama which began with the Fall and will end with the Last Judgment. Its central event is God's incarnation in a human being of humblest status who dies, by earthly standards, ignominiously on the cross.

This concrete figural realism re-emerged in the late middle ages in the mystery and morality plays, and in the sermons and deeds of some of the monks. It was lost in the heroic romances where only the top of the feudal system appears, where the economic base and secular ideas other than those of knighthood and heroism are not mentioned. In the later forms of courtly romance, nobility, greatness, and ethical values are quite unrelated to practical reality. The knights have no concrete political or historical tasks. Feats of arms and love are the only themes for the elevated style.

In Dante, the vertical relationship of the concrete historical individual to the other world and the Divine Will is most immediately and

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vividly presented. Auerbach believes, however, that the other world in the *Divine Comedy* becomes primarily a stage for human beings and passions, that Dante's inhabitants of the three realms lead a changeless existence which represents the final and absolute realization of a particular earthly personality, now set fast in God's order. The image of man eclipses the image of God.

After Dante, the divine framework was broken. The sense of the figural was lost. In Boccaccio, Rabelais, Montaigne, Shakespeare, and Cervantes, individual lives become interesting, problematic, and tragic in their own right, here on earth, with little or no reference to the supernatural scheme. This sense of human complexity derived, however, from the realistic Christian figural and creatural tradition. In Rabelais, the play of perspectival effects and the mixture of kinds of reality and of styles become ends in themselves.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, limitation of style and of genres and a corresponding limitation in the representation of reality became dominant again. This is true not only in French comedy and tragedy of the seventeenth century, governed by neo-classic rules, but in most of the work of the French Enlightenment, and in the sentimental bourgeois dramas and novels of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Germany. Goethe himself, though he had a strong sense of organic development in the individual, had taken a class attitude which prevented him from grasping contemporary historical developments with "the genetico-realistic-sensory method peculiar to him on other occasions." He had to fall back on eighteenth century moralistic reflections. The only eighteenth century writer whom Auerbach treats admiringly as in the great realistic tradition is the memoirist Saint-Simon.

In Germany at the end of the eighteenth century, however, what Auerbach calls "historism" was born. It saw history as a lawful development through distinctly different periods, each with its own peculiar complexities and depths, political, cultural, economic, folkish. Marx, Michelet, and Taine were "historicists"; so were the major French realists, Stendhal, Balzac, Flaubert, the Goncourts, and Zola, who thought of themselves as writing histories of their own period. For these novelists Auerbach has great respect, though he carefully defines their limitations, and even defends the bourgeoisie against Flaubert! "Are not these bourgeois the same people who undertook the tremendous task, the bold adventure, of the economic, scientific, and technological civilization of the nineteenth century, and who also produced the leaders of the revolutionary movements. . . ." Zola, he thinks, will increase in stature with time. *Germinal* is still a terrifying book which has lost none of its significance and timeliness.

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To twentieth-century realism, Auerbach devotes only one brief chapter, principally on Virginia Woolf, Proust, and Joyce. The perspectival play, the mixtures of styles and kinds of reality, are Rabelaisian, but the grasp of history has relaxed. In this extremely individualistic and subjective fiction, the stress is on the random contingency of real phenomena, on what occasions unexpectedly reveal, on the multipersonal representation of consciousness, on the disintegration of the continuity of exterior events. Auerbach hints darkly that with the acceleration of the world-leveling and unifying process now going on, history will take care of this confusion with a simplification hardly pleasing to those few who still love the richness and complexity of Western culture.

Auerbach writes with a humane objectivity and clarity refreshingly contrasted to the arrogance, defensiveness, snobbery, esotericism and self-conscious elaborations of most serious contemporary criticism. He restores works to their own times in a way that brings them closer to ours. He so defines relations within the work and relations between the work and outer reality that they give added meaning to each other. There has been a marked revival of appreciation of social realism in this country in the last year or two, of fiction which has both social and moral, both formal and referential meaning. *Mimesis,* which everyone responsibly interested in literature will have to read, will give this revival depth and strength.

The book is not without its own limitations, of course. Insofar as these are a matter of necessary selections and omissions, one cannot quarrel with them. Auerbach does almost nothing with English fiction before 1900, and except for a few references to Fielding, omits entirely the great realists of the English eighteenth century, Defoe, Swift, Fielding, Richardson, Smollett, and Sterne. They had not grasped *"historismus,"* but they certainly carried realism forward at a time when it was very weak on the Continent. Nor does Auerbach mention American literature.

Auerbach's chief limitations, however, are temperamental. He is rather unimaginative, rather literal, much interested in history, but not much interested in psychology or philosophy. The worlds of Freud and Jung, Bergson and Cassirer, hardly touch his. Not only does he not play with ambiguities and metaphors, with the symbolic and mythic, in the manner of the New Critics; he rarely acknowledges that such elements exist in serious work, in work that accords with reality. And though he often describes other events in a drama or novel besides the one referred to in the passages he explicates, he cannot deal with the dramatic or narrative structure as a whole with anything approaching

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the thoroughness with which he analyzes the syntax of his selected passages. As a result he has to disregard most of those questions of type characters, moral choice, probable and necessary consequences, which Aristotle raised in the *Poetics,* which have been endlessly debated since, and which have obvious bearing upon characterological and moral realism.

But if these omissions limit what *Mimesis* does, they do not weaken it. It is an acute, profound, widely informed, richly appreciative reinterpretation of some of the major works and themes in the Western European literary heritage. It has to be read slowly because the originality of some of its conceptions and the closeness of its analysis require the reader to define new attitudes toward works with which he had thought himself thoroughly familiar and to see new patterns of relation of—as Auerbach would say—a historic-religious-socio-literary kind. Once these are grasped they can be very illuminatingly applied to nearly all imaginative literature, and to our sense of ourselves as historical beings.

Robert Gorham Davis

A MASK MAINTAINED

BAUDELAIRE. A STUDY OF HIS POETRY. By Martin Turnell. New Directions. $5.00.

The literature about Baudelaire has been disappointing, especially what has been produced over here and in England. There has been nothing quite to compare with that extraordinary study, *Concerning Several Motifs in Baudelaire,* by the late German critic Walter Benjamin: a compendious typology of the poet's universe, exhibiting its total configuration now with the skill of an astronomer charting a stellar system, now with the micrological care of a scientist studying Infusoria. Alongside it, even the brave studies of Sartre and Charles Du Bos appear slight. The only English essay of real merit that comes to mind is Peter Quennell's early piece in his *Baudelaire and the Symbolists;* an elegant, somewhat mannered performance, rich in insights, eminently just in its tracing of the grand lines but deficient in its dealing with the "fine structure" of a poetry which eludes the understanding the moment after it has yielded itself generously and, as it seemed then, fully. No other body of verse is at the same time so available to the reader and yet so closed, hermetic. It seems as though Baudelaire's meanings were bent on imitating the odd secrecy of his life—forever withdrawing into narrow and lightless passages where the curious eye cannot reach. Yet one looks at the façade and finds it simple; a man steps out of the house who is

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affable, worldly, plain-spoken to a degree. There is paradox, surely, and biting wit but none of the innuendo, the obliqueness, the *insistent* mystery of a Mallarmé. These are left inside the house; in the nooks and crannies of the line; waiting to be discovered or, perhaps, hoping never to be unsealed. Wilier than the purely hermetic writer, Baudelaire developed an exoteric front which has protected him effectively against subtle interpretations of the wrong kind—and, by and large, of the right kind as well. Critics approach him as, one imagines, he would have liked to see them approach him: with a mixture of awe and faint condescension toward his "foibles"; much the way these same critics—and Baudelaire himself—would approach Victor Hugo. But what of the illumination of the work which, one presumes, is the critic's office and *raison d'être?* If the critic risks being the dupe of the poet, then the ordinary reader may find himself the dupe of the critic: there is extremely little in this vast body of interpretation that we could not have gleaned unaided. Mr. Turnell, whose studies in the classical French drama I respect a great deal, does not figure among the exceptions.

The book is divided into six chapters to which a brief conclusion is added. The chapters vary in merit. The grammatical section of the one called "Style" is easily the best, the section on prosody only slightly inferior: here the limits of inquiry are strictly defined and the critic, his sleeves rolled up, gets down to business. The short essay on *Le Voyage* has shape and contains a number of trenchant remarks. In the more ambitious sections Mr. Turnell does less well. "The Originality of Baudelaire" abounds in lame distinctions ("realism" as against "psychological realism" and the like) and the key term, *originality,* is allowed to remain fuzzy. The only place I found rewarding was the one where some of Laforgue's remarks on Baudelaire's literary attitudes are quoted: I wish the author had quoted them all. In that distorting mirror certain aspects of the older man's work are flashed upon us persuasively, with the sharp outlines of extreme exaggeration, while others appear grotesquely dwarfed or are lost altogether. But neither does Mr. Turnell's selection do full justice to the sharp idiosyncrasy that colors these *aperçus* nor his comment to the part played by historical distance as their necessary setting. Laforgue is presented to us as a "true" witness who, if he errs at all, does so by omission only, never by slanting. That seems to me to be a rather naive view of the way in which writers reflect upon their predecessors: T. S. Eliot, whose authority in such matters Mr. Turnell likes to invoke, has certainly done nothing to encourage any simple notions about critical reception and recognition. "A 19th-Century Vocation" is largely a retelling of what the autobiograph-

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ical and biographical sources have given us in the way of information. The narrative is arresting, as one would expect it to be, but neither especially distinguished nor (except for the last few pages of the section) very relevant to the purpose of the book, which claims to be a history of the poetry. The central chapter, "The Interpretation of the *Fleurs du Mal,*" seems strangely pedestrian for so gifted a writer. It is less tainted than some of the others by what I consider to be Mr. Turnell's besetting sin: his ready way, untroubled by any scruple of method, of dividing the work into a mortal and an abiding half; his compulsion to make excuses for his author, too often of a donnish or downright prissy kind ("He also belonged to his age and while we must deplore the fact that some of its least admirable attitudes found their way into his poetry, this was to a large extent inseparable from his achievement")—suffering, instead, from two complementary weaknesses: a laboring of the obvious and a substitution of circumstantial paraphrase for exegesis. An example of the former will have to suffice: "We must next examine the psychological reasons for B's preoccupation with coldness and distance. When we look at the last two lines of *'Je t'adore à l'égal'*: *'Et je chéris, ô bête implacable et cruelle!/Jusqu'à cette froideur par où tu m'es plus belle!'* we cannot fail to notice the perverse element. It is clear that the woman's coldness is the the cause of her attraction, that the poet does not want her to give herself or to rouse her." It is clear indeed—so clear that we feel slightly embarrassed. And one wonders whether such statements are the result of innocence, of overconscientiousness or simply of a certain insensitivity, lack of discretion. Whatever the source, they betray a radical want of humor. We read them, and as we read can hear Baudelaire's laughter—sardonic, diabolical—in the distance.

But what bothered me most in this book was the careless way in which Mr. Turnell shirks every major encounter in the arena of ideas and so misses practically all his chances: for even to be undone by an idea is better than not to have faced it. Reverence for his poet does not keep him from subjecting Baudelaire to the reductive method bred of the most facile, and hence the most fashionable, branch of nominalist thinking. Was he afraid he might be classed with the obscurantists if he dealt resolutely—I would have said "seriously" were Mr. Turnell not such a serious man himself—with ideas as central as those of the *Idol* and the *Absolute*? These are the true cruxes, or *aporiae,* in the work of Baudelaire; by the same token, the true challenges hurled at his interpreter. To reduce them is to discount their significance altogether; their significance, I mean, as the stable norms around which a poetic cosmos groups and organizes itself. To treat them as necessary fictions—with

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that cursory gesture we have all come to expect in recent criticism—proves self-defeating. The critic, instead of undoing the knot or being undone by it, simply abjures his function and steps into the next room where things are easier, the walls bright with anecdote. One wave of the hand and the Idol disappears: "And we begin to suspect that the Idol is a defence-mechanism against the Bitch." Another, and the Absolute thins out into mist: "In his poetry he is constantly in search of something that he describes as the 'Ideal' or the 'Absolute,' but it is evident that he does not believe in its existence." One turns away and thinks of Charles Du Bos' theological—*not* religious—analysis where terms had sharp edges; where true connections were made among the "extreme" terms of Baudelaire's discourse; where terms were seen as truly *designating,* standing for fixed properties of the mind and reaching outward, beyond themselves, not ruinously, suicidally downward. Mr. Turnell has been the victim of specious concreteness, unaware it seems of the fact that psychological explanation must exercise great care in choosing its objects; that there are objects which resist being "fixed" in this fashion—having a nature that is general but not at all vaporous, vague—and so must be condensed, if we wish to condense them, in terms germane to their proper existence. "Reduction" destroys them utterly; and one hopes that it was not *this* the critic intended, that he lacked full cognizance of the damage his method entailed.

Mr. Turnell's studies of Laforgue and Corbière—preparatory, in a sense, to this one—were incisive; but those were writers who, while they pose problems, are easy to deal with. They give themselves as they are, that is to say, as the figures into whom they have stylized themselves, without serious equivocation. The psychologist may find some difficulty in equating the man with the *persona;* for the literary critic there is no embarrassment here. Baudelaire's case is different. The critic, no less than the analyst, finds cause for disturbance. These poems mask as much as they reveal and precisely where they seem to reveal most. Baudelaire has pushed non-conformism to its logical extreme: he even refuses to conform to the image he himself has set up, with consummate plausibility, in the mind of his reader. Peter Quennell writes on the first page of his study: "How such a poet spent his days, what kind of a man he was, what measure of personal success crowned his life, are questions seldom asked more fruitlessly than when we apply them to the remains of Charles Baudelaire. The records he left behind him are voluminous, detailed, communicative, and yet an air of singular reticence guards his name." A good remark, this, if not especially startling. But once we make

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it apply to the work, as well as to the life, it begins to look far from ordinary. In Baudelaire's verse documentation pours forth, inexhaustibly, from an inexhaustible fund of darkness: Hugo's "mouth of shadow." There is nothing wry here; nothing held back; what comes out is speech that is plain, sometimes crass, almost shockingly public. The haunting secret which remains seems to dwell entirely in the generating source, the *secrétaire,* repository of so much true evidence:

> *Un gros meuble à tiroirs encombré de bilans,*
> *De vers, de billets doux, de procès, de romances,*
> *Avec de lourds cheveux roulés dans des quittances,*
> *Cache moins de secrets que mon triste cerveau.*

What we find in such lines is more than mere analogy. Those drawers which are the compartments of the brain guard jealously their dubious treasure. Mr. Turnell, for all his patient effort, has failed to make the drawer speak.

Francis Golffing

THE STRAINS OF A PRIVATE LIFE

A WRITER'S DIARY: Being Extracts From the Diary of Virginia Woolf. Edited by Leonard Woolf. Harcourt, Brace. $5.00.

"Gide's journal, again full of startling recollection—things I could have said myself."

So Virginia Woolf in 1934, and so any one of us, for it is part of the charm of reading diaries that we find *ourselves* in them. Everything is sharp and familiar yet different: the shorthand of daily feelings, groans and wishes, resentments, future plans and new ideas, dreariness, occasional insight and honesty, the impatient arrogance of wanting to be considered. In the public image, a writer's pain is as serious as pleasure, on the grand scale; but in diaries, in notebooks, in letters, we sense the relaxed formless irritation which is no less a part of a writer's life, where depression may lead to work as well as violence, and work may fade into depression—suddenly, without reason, inexplicably, because the diary has no more achieved form than the pain it records. It is the only form, other than dreams or conversation, to express the daily life, quiet or desperate, which is not clearly shaped in triumph or madness; the civilized pain we all bear or try to turn into pearls is diffuse and ordinary: we act out nothing but a headache. Perhaps for that reason it is best to skim these extracts from Virginia Woolf's diary; to dip into them here and there is a delight, although to read from

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beginning to end may be a bore and a disappointment, too much like life itself.

For, it is a fascinating book, but not because it is so very unusual *as a diary*. From the twenty-six blankbooks that Virginia Woolf filled between 1915 and 1941, her husband has selected those portions which relate to her writing life and made it a *writer's diary*. Mr. Woolf realizes the danger in producing a proper, smooth, "literary" portrait, but we can respect his intention as well as his understandable reluctance to publish all the diaries at the present time. Some distortion is inevitable, although for other writers it might be more serious; even if *these* passages are deeply felt, they haven't the intensity of a diary written by someone who writes nothing else. The emotional code, the carelessness, the remarks like "I can't go into it here" are never indulged by people for whom the diary is *uniquely* important. Most of these entries are not "written" with high seriousness; there is little choosing or polishing of phrases, no exhaustive hunt for the proper word. The reader is not always peering over this writer's shoulder.

We are ignorant about other notebooks Virginia Woolf may have kept, but in these extracts there is very little discussion of *the matter* of the books she was writing when she wrote in the diary. She did not usually project scenes or movement in Jamesian style: "Better to have Lily say nothing to Tansley, the revelation comes from him while they ride down to Cornwall (or Skye?) together—or should it be a fight on the lawn?" Instead, the fight is in Lily Briscoe's mind, there is nothing of it here. Rather, Mrs. Woolf writes about moods, about the progress or sales of her books, the comments of friends and reviewers, and of the events of daily life. She writes about the difficulty of writing, about straining, galloping, aching, trying, failing, rather than about explicit literary problems or even explicit themes. We see more clearly what kind of a diary it is when we note that—in these extracts at least—the *subjects* of Mrs. Woolf's books, in the usual sense, seldom entered her mind.[1] And if this practice makes sense for fiction, which it surely does, we may be surprised to find Virginia Woolf following it with her discursive works as well: *Three Guineas* itself, for example, is far more open, more *specific,* than any of the few diary comments about it, for the diary stood in a complex and indirect relation to her actual creative ideas. The real planning and shaping went on somewhere else and by another method. And there is also reason to believe that Mrs. Woolf's creative states ("making up," she calls it) were absolute enough to

1 Her real subjects, however, were unusual: "the sea is to be heard all through it" (*To the Lighthouse*), is an example.

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allow very little transition between them and the diary. It was the difference between being "Virginia" and being "a sensibility": "when I write I'm merely a sensibility. Sometimes I like being Virginia, but only when I'm scattered and various and gregarious. Now, so long as we are here [in the country] I'd like to be only a sensibility." In itself this is not so striking, but we note the terms of the distinction and that the diary addressed "old Virginia" or, in the early days, "Virginia of 1940": the sensibility neither wrote it nor, I think, read it.

"Virginia" had many friends and was, as some of them recall, the pivot of that remarkable Bloomsbury circle, a society of rare distinction like nothing most people have ever known. She went abroad, she walked in London and in the country, went to parties, and wrote in the diary daily or every few days. London was then small enough so that she could seem to be close to the center of its intellectual and literary life, and the Hogarth Press, which she and Leonard Woolf founded, gave that closeness an explicit form. She read widely, as the distinguished "common reader" that she was, and observed herself, her contemporaries, and her elders (note a Hardy visit, arguments with T. S. Eliot over *Ulysses,* conversations with Lytton Strachey, tea with Katherine Mansfield and J. M. Murry, encounters with E. M. Forster at the London Library, deputizing for Eliot at Lady Ottoline Morrell's funeral); and much of it went into the diary in the form of brief comments or interesting vignettes. Mrs. Woolf's thoughts about literature spring up everywhere, fascinating, but only fragmentary here: her considered opinions are in the essays. If "Roger" and "Clive" are mentioned frequently, there is very little on what either of them wrote or the painting that interested them. "Tom" and "Morgan" are quoted on *Ulysses* or on *her* work; in the diary she doesn't discuss what *they* did, except that when "Desmond" praises "East Coker" she feels jealous, or when "Morgan" finishes *A Passage to India* his feeling of failure resembles her own. Naturally, in this diary—and like most diarists—Virginia Woolf takes the center of the stage, and the Bloomsbury friends may seem reduced to a claque; but she knew her own vanity even while she observed and practiced her own voice, as writers must.

Nor did the degrees of self-consciousness escape her. Mrs. Woolf herself said that one gets into the habit of recording, in a diary, only certain kinds of feelings, only the depressions or difficulties, or the self-abasement. Transitions may not be noted, and all the life outside the diary leaves only the sediment of a posturing self. Consider her headaches, for example. When she notes or describes them, we get some sense of this writer's daily life; but how accurate is the picture so

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conveyed, *especially* if the entries are incomplete and omissions not indicated? We know only that she had a headache nearly all the time, enough to prevent most people from functioning at all, not to speak of writing some twenty or more books. Mrs. Woolf's headache was such a continual complaint and so important for the progress of her creative work that we want to know more about what she thought of it, if there was any more—and we don't even know *that*. In order to balance such distortions—they can never be righted—we must keep in mind that mass of other material which the editor considered irrelevant to a *writer's* diary and remember too how many of Virginia Woolf's thoughts were reserved to those two hours in the morning when she did her creative work. Above all, we must remember what it may be like to keep a diary, to see ourselves in this. How else can we understand some of the more cryptic passages or appreciate the sameness of most entries? Year follows year, but the feelings continue very much as before; yet this was not true of the novels: one would not expect, reading the 1926 entries, that part of *To the Lighthouse* might scan almost like Pindar, or that the very different *Between the Acts* might run together with the later entries. Then we may be startled by passages we cannot assess at all, like this:

Friday, October 30th [1936]

I do not wish for the moment to write out the story of the months since I made the last mark here. [June 23rd] I do not wish, for reasons I cannot now develop, to analyse that extraordinary summer. It will be more helpful and healthy for me to write scenes; to take up my pen and describe actual events; good practice too for my stumbling and doubting pen. Can I still "write"? That is the question, you see. And now I will try to prove if the gift is dead, or dormant.

There is something bleakly horrifying about this, unlike the strained and exacerbated feeling of the other entries, the other kind of despair or rage. She had been working on *The Years* which—we learn later—was nothing less than a major ordeal; it is there we should find the meaning of that summer of 1936, there, and in *Between the Acts* when Miss La Trobe strains to convey a vision. But also it is at such points that we are reminded: this is the diary of a woman who committed suicide.

Some readers have apparently been shocked by her sensitivity to criticism as she reveals it in worry over reviews and her need for praise; and some writers have been surprised that *this* should seem shocking. Of course, Mrs. Woolf expressed something of what all writers must feel about reviews, about acceptance or rejection, praise, or criticism: pictures must be looked at, actors must be heard, writers

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must be read, and the response can never be guaranteed. Most people don't so arrange their lives that they "institutionalize" this acceptance or rejection; but writers do. I think it is Mrs. Woolf's insatiable desire for praise which seems shocking: most people won't or can't express it even if their desire is quite as desperate.

Wanting so much consideration, she was rarely able to say—and *believe* it—"Do Morgan and Tom and Desmond really matter?" Instead, "the pack may howl, but it shall never catch me"; and if "the pack" means "reviewers, friends, and enemies," who else is left? It is no discredit to Mr. Woolf's opinion, a very fine one indeed, to say that she thought too much of it, as she did of all the opinions in her circle. They were rare ones, some of them the very best of literary opinions—who would not have valued "Tom" and "Morgan" on what one wrote?—but they mattered to her *so much* that she struggled too hard against them without the advantage of doing it openly, even in the diary. It seems a point of no small interest to note the word "d——d" occurring.

The wonder is that with this heavy burden of expected censure, Virginia Woolf was able to write so much, that pearls did come out of *this* pain. I have said nothing about her passion, her energy, her persistence, and her extreme devotion to literature: those were extraordinary. Nor have I mentioned her vision, her mysticism, her ideas of time or reality: these are famous, and anyone who reads this review will already have seen Miss Bowen's comments, Mr. Auden's, and Miss Godden's, and should not need further persuasion. The diary enlightens our ignorance only a little about that vision's springs of action, but no diary could do more to suggest the private life which was contingent upon that writing.

Sonya Rudikoff

SYMBOLISM AND/OR LITERATURE

SYMBOLISM AND AMERICAN LITERATURE. By Charles Feidelson, Jr. University of Chicago Press. $6.50.

Twenty years ago Edmund Wilson observed (in *Axel's Castle*) that "by the middle of the century, the Romantic writers in the United States—Poe, Hawthorne, Melville, Whitman, and even Emerson—were, for reasons which it would be interesting to determine, developing in the direction of Symbolism." Yvor Winters' *Maule's Curse*—in my opinion, still the most distinguished book in the field—was the first noteworthy attempt to determine these interesting reasons. Winters was wonderfully well equipped to write a study of symbolism in American

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literature. Like so many other defenders of reason, he has a cantankerous and crotchety mind which will stand no nonsense and refuses to be impressed by historical "laws," metaphysical architectonics, or overdramatized banalities. This is an indispensable quality in a critic of literary movements, especially a movement with the corrupting prestige of Symbolism (how often, in recent years, has conformity to the canons of this one limited aesthetic theory been considered the ultimate touchstone of literary intelligence!). Winters can respond to a symbolic work with sensitivity and profound understanding, but he will not be bullied by the dogmas of Mallarmé into puffing a minor writer like Poe or a defective novel of Melville. Nor does he fall happily into step with conventional valuations. For all his occasional eccentricity of taste and his sometimes crude theorizing, he has the supreme virtue of making his experience of the work the central issue of his criticism. To him, symbolism is a way of coping with experience that must be judged in each case by whether it illuminates or obscures, opens up the world or insulates the poet from it.

Mr. Feidelson approaches the problem of symbolism in American literature with a formidable stride, determined to make good the defects of *Maule's Curse*. Like Winters, he rejects the view of American literature as a body of discrete texts, drawing no nourishment from one another, each writer struggling unaided in his loneliness. There is, he finds, a tradition, but the tradition does not grow out of a common theme like the dedication of the novelists to the possibilities of democracy (as Matthiessen and, more recently, Marius Bewley have asserted), but rather "the really vital common denominator is precisely their attitude toward their medium . . . ; their distinctive quality is a devotion to the possibilities of symbolism." Put in this form, the completely valid and relevant concern Wilson, Winters, and others feel with the symbolic nature of American writing is insidiously transformed into something else. Can a "devotion to the possibilities of symbolism"—which is a category appropriate to literary history and not to literary experience—ever be a "really *vital*" quality? Mr. Feidelson is offering a conception in which literature finally refers to nothing outside itself. Nor does he make any bones about this; he is not afraid of following the logic of his position through:

> Symbolism as a literary school is distinctively *problematic*, not merely in the sense in which every literary symbol is indeterminate, but more specifically in the sense that its characteristic subject is its own equivocal method. . . . When the symbolistic method becomes the theme of symbolism, the literary work is attaining the immediate reality of symbol by acknowledging that language, after all, is at the same time mediate.

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This is a difficult passage—Mr. Feidelson often writes on a level of abstraction which seems to indicate that he is reasoning from *a priori* premises rather than describing his reactions to literature. It is hard, for example, to imagine how anyone attending to the poem itself could say that a work achieves "the immediate reality of symbol" by the mere choice of a theme. What the poet does with this theme is the crucial question; the choice by itself means little and can never constitute an "acknowledgment" about language or anything else.

In any case, Mr. Feidelson appears to be saying that a symbolic work is imperfect insofar as it deals with an object other than itself. For he takes the aim of the early French Symbolists very seriously indeed; literature must approach as nearly as possible to the condition of music. But why should it? According to Mr. Feidelson, there were two types of mind in the nineteenth century, the "romantic" and the "naturalistic." The one conceived of literature as "self-expression," the other as "description." In time both of these "methods" were played out, since both presupposed a dualistic universe (Blake? Coleridge? Wordsworth?); but new developments in philosophy showed dualism to be untenable as well as ruinous. Symbolism bridges the Cartesian gap, proceeding on the premise that language is the "medium" in which subject and object fuse. Thus it follows that the artist approaches reality by exploiting his medium, by worrying about the resources of language rather than what he has to say. These are all notions made familiar by Eliot, Blackmur, Ransom, Tate. Mr. Feidelson, however, seems to carry them about as far as they can go, and by doing so exposes a few interesting implications of the theory. I am thinking particularly of his admission that the symbolic method itself is the characteristic theme of symbolic art. I cannot see how his claim that subject and object fuse in the "medium" is in the least justified by this observation. Taken literally, it would seem to damn the whole movement as sterile. For what on earth ever happened to the object in this picture? Is it *really* hidden in the language? I agree that the fusion of subject and object is an admissible way of describing one of the things achieved by a successful poem, but in my opinion this is the product of an experience which has been understood as coherent (form) and contemplated through the detachment of the artist's vision.

Unlike Winters, then, who sees in symbolism another technique to be put into the service of an effort to understand our experience of the world, Mr. Feidelson is the committed champion of a movement, regarding symbolism as an end in itself. Why all this faith in the healing power of one narrowly defined literary school? Because Mr. Feidelson—

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who calls himself a "critical humanist"—believes that Symbolism is our only alternative to Christianity in dealing with the dualistic view of reality which is behind all our troubles. There is no space to examine this astonishing claim, except to point out that never for a moment does Mr. Feidelson venture to challenge the interpretation of the cultural history of the last three centuries on which the Christian "solution" is based. Consequently his easy acceptance of propagandistic simplifications (i.e., romanticism equals self-expression or solipsism) which have served as the resort of literary demagoguery in our time, betrays him in the end.

But Mr. Feidelson assures us that his "end is not pure theory but practical criticism," and it would therefore be more just and more useful to remove the discussion of his book from the plane of speculation. This, however, is no easy matter, for his aesthetic theories impinge directly upon his analyses of individual works. For example, he says of *The Scarlet Letter* that it is "a kind of exposition of the nature of symbolic perception. Hawthorne's subject is not only the meaning of adultery but also meaning in general; not only *what* the focal symbol means but also *how* it gains significance." In a sense this is true, but how important, after all, is the theme of "the meaning of meaning" to this particular novel? Does it have much, or anything, to do with our *experience* of the book? Mr. Feidelson seems to think that it has greater importance than Hawthorne's "ethical concerns." For the fact is that he is far more interested in Hawthorne as an epistemologist than as the author of a great novel on what it is like to sin, to be proud, to be torn between the demands of the self and the demands of society and God, to be damned. The same speculative preoccupations lead Mr. Feidelson to make *Pierre* rather than *Moby Dick* the center of his discussion of Melville. There must be something wrong with a theory that discovers more support in a failure than in a masterpiece. Finally, the theory leads him to attribute the kind of stature to Poe which will not bear the first stirrings of critical questioning. On the other hand, he does have some refreshing things to say about Emerson's philosophy—which perhaps signifies where Mr. Feidelson's real ability lies.

The study of American literature is probably the most treacherous of all testing-grounds for a critical theory. Unlike the Victorian novel, say, whose strength was in its generally high level—the tradition itself had vitality—the American novel, as Mr. Feidelson observes, was based on a relatively immature tradition:

> Considered as pure romantics [*sic*], they are minor disciples of European masters. Their symbolistic method is their title to literary inde-

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pendence. Whether romantic or symbolistic, they wrote no masterpieces; the relative immaturity of the American literary tradition cannot be denied. But as symbolists they look forward to one of the most sophisticated movements in literary history; however inexpert, they broaden the possibilities of literature.

This, in the teeth of *The Scarlet Letter, Moby Dick,* "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd," etc. etc. (And why does Mr. Feidelson take no notice of Emily Dickinson?) For the paradox is that the relatively immature literary tradition of nineteenth-century America *did* contain individual masterpieces which can stand on their own feet without justification from later developments in twentieth-century literature. That is the "problem" of American literature with which the critic must begin. Because Mr. Feidelson fails to see this, he continually makes too much of insignificant works and too little of great ones. Because he fails to feel it, his analyses rarely seem to take off from the effect of the novel or poem on the reader. He provides insight and illumination as a philosopher (particularly in the brilliant section on the relation between Puritanism and language). But as a practical critic, he is abstract and conventional, often to the point of reading the texts as though they were tentative experiments which have by now been superseded and which are chiefly interesting for the picture they provide of minds desperately struggling with epistemological problems that a more fortunate age has solved.

Norman Podhoretz

HUMANIST EXISTENTIALISM

THE ORIGIN AND GOAL OF HISTORY. By Karl Jaspers. Yale University Press. $4.00.

The role of Karl Jaspers in the existentialist movement has been primarily one of interpretation and mediation. As with other existentialists, his most conspicuous initial motivation is a sense of horror at the disappearance of human autonomy and responsibility in the mass society produced by the industrial revolution; but his writing displays little of that acutely personal sense of loneliness and anxiety which pervades the work of his masters, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. He has set out instead to evaluate and modify their insights by linking them with the previous tradition of Western thought.

Existentialist metaphysics starts from the proposition that since the dualism of subject and object in the knowing process is unsurmountable, man cannot regard either his own being or the totality of the universe

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as possible objects of cognition; hence all intellectual systems purporting to explain human nature and destiny are necessarily fallacious, and man's immediate experience of his own freedom has a validity that cannot be undermined by scientific argument. Jaspers goes on to declare that the awareness of freedom is necessarily associated with the sense of a spiritual reality transcending the material world of space and time, and also with the recognition of a need for communication with other beings and of the unity of the human race. This assertion, which marks the point at which he parts company with his more uncompromising fellow existentialists, appears to be based on immediate intuition rather than on any logical necessity, but this does not mean that it is invalid. Jaspers is thereby enabled to move toward conservative conclusions. Arguing that the triple recognition of freedom, transcendence and the unity of mankind was the foundation of the major religions and philosophical systems of the past, he interprets existentialism as primarily a reassertion of truths known to earlier European thinkers from Plato down to Kant but temporarily forgotten in the age of technology. The ethic which he deduces from these doctrines is, on the whole, traditional, with a markedly Lutheran flavor. Although he does not regard the dogmas of Christianity or any other religion as more than a necessarily inadequate system of symbols, he believes in moral imperatives derived from the sense of transcendence, and urges individuals to participate in established institutions rather than repudiating or rebelling against their society.

This book is an application of the existentialist view of man to world history. Jaspers insists that each historic situation is unique and the future is unpredictable; social changes cannot be explained in terms either of cyclic processes or of movement toward any predestined end. Humanity moves forward by a series of jumps resulting from man's capacity for free action. But the central theme of history has been man's discovery of transcendence and the consequent growth both of individual freedom and of the unity of mankind. The first two major jumps were the advent of man as a new biological species and the beginning of civilization, about which we know almost nothing. The third was the promulgation of philosophies and higher religions in what Jaspers calls the Axial Period, running roughly from 800 to 200 B.C. In three separate areas of the world, the Mediterranean, India and China, men began at about the same time to repudiate tribal religion and assert the autonomy of the individual and his direct relationship with the universal. In each area intellectual progress was stimulated by similar conditions, especially by the division into many small states; and in each of them the Axial Period was followed by attempts to establish political

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unity through an empire. But Jaspers argues, with considerable plausibility, that the parallelism of their spiritual development cannot be wholly explained in rationalistic terms, and regards it as a significant illustration of the unity of mankind. Human beings have been living ever since on the spiritual capital accumulated during the Axial Period, and only those societies that have been permeated with its spirit have been able to make any further contribution to human progress.

After the Axial Period the three areas continued to develop along roughly parallel lines for fifteen hundred years. India and China then fell into decadence, but the West, on the other hand, experienced another major transformation through the discovery of science and technology. This has made world unity not only possible but also necessary, but at the same time it has led to forms of economic organization in which the individual has lost his sense of transcendence and of unity with others and become a depersonalized puppet of a mass society. Our civilization can be regenerated only through a rediscovery of the truths proclaimed during the Axial Period. It is possible that the human race may end by destroying itself. On the other hand, we may be approaching a new Axial Period in which man's spiritual vitality will revive, and lead to a reassertion of individual freedom and to the political unification of mankind.

It is easy to point out stretches of low-pressure thinking in this book. Much of what Jaspers says, for example, about the virtues of a mixed economic system that will promote social welfare while avoiding the destruction of freedom through over-all planning, or about the need for a world federation based on the rule of law and allowing for cultural diversities, is neither particularly new nor particularly helpful. But the whole is more impressive than the parts. Jaspers is careful never to twist facts in order to find corroboration for his view of man, and the validity of his sketch of world history does not depend on the philosophy with which he interprets it. Though he believes that spiritual truths are beyond the scope of scientific knowledge, he understands scientific method and gives an acute analysis of its development. And though his bent is mystical, he insists that man's knowledge of God is always imperfect and hence condemns any form of theological or ethical intolerance. In an age of fanaticisms he still maintains the sanity and comprehensive sympathies characteristic of the Humanist tradition. At a time when professional philosophy in England and the United States has largely abdicated from any position of leadership and narrowed itself to the analysis of semantic conundrums, one feels especially inclined to applaud an academician who still believes that philosophy's proper function is to deal with the central problems of the human predicament.

Henry Bamford Parkes

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LIBERAL SOAP OPERA

During the Roosevelt-Truman era, there were two kinds of liberals in America: the "practicals," who made the New Deal—politicians like Ickes, labor leaders like Reuther, college professors like Berle and Tugwell—and the "intellectuals" (the quotes are also in order here) who wrote and argued about it—Max Lerner, Freda Kirchwey, Bruce Bliven and the like. The "practicals," who in a decade wrought a social revolution which took generations in Europe, were not much affected by Communism, indeed not much interested in it; they had power, they were changing things right here, they were pragmatists rather than idealists or doctrinaires. The "intellectuals," however, were often drawn to Communism because they felt impotent and the idea of "one-sixth of the globe" being on their side was comforting, because they were more internationally-minded than the "practicals" and so desperately hoped in the Soviet Union as the axis of world anti-fascism, and because they needed an ideology. The work of the "practicals" has endured; Eisenhower's victory has chipped the New Deal but has not shattered or even cracked it. But the faith of the "intellectuals" has turned sour as Soviet Communism has emerged as a totalitarian system like Nazism. But, although this kind of liberalism has disappeared as a political force, it survives as a nostalgic myth, so that in most liberal-intellectual circles it is still risky to say a good word for Whittaker Chambers or a bad one for Owen Lattimore. The myth survives because the liberals have never honestly confronted their illusions in the '30s and '40s about Communism but have instead merely counterposed a disingenuous defense, a blanket denial to McCarthy's equally sweeping attack. One does not learn from experiences which one refuses to examine. The survival of the liberal myth, which glosses over Soviet Communism's shortcomings and correspondingly exaggerates those of American capitalism, is a big factor in delaying that political reorientation that our liberal ideology has so long needed.

Charles Wertenbaker's *The Death of Kings*,[1] although of less than no interest as a novel, is of considerable significance in the above context. For it presents the liberal myth with an enthusiasm that is all the more extreme precisely because the author has never been a practicing liberal, who might by now have lost a few illusions by sheer dint of unhappy experience, but rather a Virginia-type gentleman who wears his

1 Random House. $3.95.

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liberalism as his ancestors might have worn their plumed hats. That even today he finds this intellectually tattered and morally bedraggled garb a respectable, even dashing costume is a tribute partly to his innocence—he has written a period piece without knowing it—and partly to the curious vitality of liberal mythology.

The story begins one evening in 1938 when Louis Baron, who resembles Henry Luce right up to his shaggy eyebrows and who is the new publisher of *Beacon*, a news magazine not wholly unlike *Time*, confers with five of his top editors. They are liberals—using the term as the novel does, as meaning *pro* TVA, labor, Spanish Loyalists, and *anti* lynching, Huey Long, big business, and appeasement (of Hitler's Germany, that is, appeasement of Stalin's Russia being just good common sense)—and they have come to talk politics with their new boss. They leave reassured. The rest of the book takes the story up to 1950, telling how Baron's increasing conservatism wrecks the lives and careers of the five who met with him in 1938. *The Death of Kings* is thus a political novel, a novel of ideas.[2]

To write a successful novel of ideas, an author must have (1) ideas, or at least the ability to deal with them, and (2) a level of consciousness superior to that of his characters. As to (1), the following is a fair sample of Mr. Wertenbaker's intellection, which is as woolly as his Harris-tweed prose:

> The bright dome had passed from his sight, and so had the other domes of the Pantheon and Val de Grace, squashed by a perspective that stunted even Notre Dame, and he thought it was a sacrilege to look down on Paris, as it would have been a sacrilege for God to look down on the hopes of men knowing their unfulfillment. But no. If God was the sum of human hopes (and what else could He be?), then He *had* looked down, as the war was ending, and had glimpsed the dimmest reflection of Himself—enough to keep men believing and striving, as they had been put on the face of the earth to do.

As to (2), when Stendhal anatomized obscurantist reaction in post-Napoleonic Parma or when Dostoevsky made Nihilism the theme of *The Possessed,* they stood apart from and above their characters and so were able to penetrate into the ideas those characters lived by and

2 Even the sex, of which there is a saleable amount, is heavily politicalized. Two lovers talking in bed sound like a branch meeting. "Don't you believe the world will have to go socialist?" asks the girl. "Something like that, eventually," concedes the man, but adds that he prefers the 1776 kind of revolution to the Marxist kind. "And what about the colonial people?" counters the lady. "If I ever have to choose between the people anywhere and what I think is good for me as a privileged American, I hope I choose the people," he replies with the smugness the author often confuses with political virtue. "Then you're one of us," his inamorata sums up, "and that's why I'm in your bed."

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demonstrate them clearly. But Mr. Wertenbaker flounders around in the bog of liberal mythology just as blunderingly as his characters, following with them the *ignes fatui* that beckon in the foggy air. Consider, for example, the crucial 1938 conference. Baron convinces his liberal editors that he is one of them by delivering a pompous and banal lecture on revolutions, which he believes always aim at "the liberation of mankind" but are always corrupted by power, winding up with a line of malarkey that a *Life* editorialist might hesitate to perpetrate (though he would probably overcome the hesitation). "What are we fighting for?" asks Baron—they are always asking each other questions like "What do you mean, *really,* by principles?" "We're fighting for that line in the Declaration of Independence that says all men are created equal; it's just as simple as that. . . . And since the ideal of equality can never be reached, this revolution of ours will go on as long as there are men to fight it." His five listeners, whom the author presents as not only competent journalists but also men of serious political principles, are wowed:

> He had won them; Berkeley saw it; and Louis, lifting the heavy brows to stare each one in the face, could not fail to see it, too. He pushed on to seal it into speech.
>
> "We're the kings of the present time—and I'm not mixing my political metaphors because, remember, it was the early kings who led the people against the nobles. We're kings because we wear the crown and wield the scepter of truth. So I'll tell you what to call our principle. I'll tell you what to call *us.*"
>
> He paused until the last ripple of sound had been smoothed into silence, then into it cast his words: "Call us kings of the revolution!"

The reader is supposed to feel sympathy and respect for grown-up men who are deceived by this sort of cheap bombast. The misadventures of such addlepated heroes might be presented successfully in terms of farce or of pathos, but not, as Mr. Wertenbaker does, as matter for high tragedy.

The Death of Kings stresses two main tenets of the liberal myth: that the main trouble with our press is ideological, i.e., that it reflects the reactionary views of its owners; and that Communism is no worse than a bad cold.

It is interesting to note that the fictional Baron's magazines grow more reactionary as they grow older and more powerful, which is what the liberal myth would lead one to expect, but those of the real Henry Luce have developed the other way: the turning point was around 1937 when Luce, impressed by the viability of the New Deal and alarmed by the military threat of Nazi Germany, kicked upstairs the late Laird

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Shields Goldsborough, whose incredible Foreign News section had built up Mussolini and Franco. For many years now the Lucepapers, while they have favored Chiang Kai-shek, General MacArthur, and the Republicans, have also been consistently favorable to civil liberties and racial equality and have opposed McCarthyism. The real trouble with *Time* and *Life,* as with other big-circulation organs, is cultural rather than ideological. They are edited according to superficial formulae designed to sell not capitalism but papers. In a sense, they are *too* democratic: they try so hard to titillate and entertain a mass audience that they cannot tell much of the truth. Not because they suppress it, but because it hardly ever happens to fit the Procrustean bed of their technique. How can *Time* get very close to reality when every story has to be tailored and tortured into a little drama, with an angle, a climax, an arresting lead, and a "kicker" at the end? Or when, to make the news "vivid," issues are systematically reduced to personalities, so that one learns that Eden wore a derby and Dulles chainsmoked but not what the conference meant.

The chief evidence, however, that Mr. Wertenbaker gives of Baron's fall from grace is his mean-spirited suspicion of Soviet Communism. When the publisher asks Berkeley, the "point-of-view" character in the book and as muttonheaded a progressive as I have encountered since the Wallace campaign, apropos a colleague accused of having been a Soviet spy, "How do you know what a traitor is?", Berkeley replies: "In your guts. That's what they're for." This reply is a stylistic and intellectual epitome of the book. A clause beginning with "in" doesn't quite fit as an answer to "how." And guts are to digest food, not to think with. It was the Nazis who did their thinking with their blood, and it isn't much better to think with one's stomach. Viz.:

> Berkeley's attitude toward Russia, like that of many of his countrymen in high places and low, had developed less through the intellect than through the generous emotions. He had little real knowledge on which to base an intellectual judgment; all he could believe with certainty was that Russia's leaders would go to any length to preserve what they had won by revolution. When he compared the noble professions of that revolution with its assault on man's painfully built moral structure, he could not but feel that the ideal had been degraded almost past redemption. But when he read how bravely millions of people were suffering and dying to save it, when he read into the actions of the Russian rulers a greater tolerance of democratic ways, he could not but hope that the ideal might yet be redeemed, and that the two great revolutionary nations [i.e., the USA and the USSR] might pursue similar ends, if not in similar ways, at least with a similar regard for human dignity.

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What a museum of outworn liberalistic clichés! And how extraordinary that a political novel expressing the crudest illusions of the "Popular Front" psychology of the '30s should today be reviewed sympathetically and seriously even in so sophisticated a journal as *The New Yorker!* The liberal myth is indeed a tough old bird. Myself, I found the deplorable Louis Baron generally right on Communism as against his progressive but woolly-witted antagonists. He shocks them in 1939 by wanting to criticize *both* Hitler and Stalin, and in 1945 by suppressing a story by Berkeley about "democracy and Communism working together in Czechoslovakia" and by damning the Yalta conference. I can even sympathize with his annoyance over "the pressure of 'Communist' members of the New York Newspaper Guild," for I remember that when I worked for Luce in the early '30s, there *were* Communists in the Guild, notably one who helped me organize the Time-Fortune unit.[3] "Even if the great majority of the Chinese people are for the Communists—the ignorant Chinese people, mind you—that's no reason for us to be for 'em," Baron sensibly observes to Berkeley, who replies with his usual fatuity, "It strikes me as a pretty good reason." According to liberal mythology, The People are always right, except for the Germans under Hitler.

It's not considered sporting for a reviewer to comment on a writer's professional competence—at least I assume this is why so few reviewers pay any attention to the matter—but the fact is that Mr. Wertenbaker, although a journalist since the age of twenty-one and the author of nine books, is a most amateurish writer—clumsy, long-winded, bumbling, and pretentious. He overloads his descriptive passages with details, but somehow omits the one that would make the scene vivid. He can linger longer over lighting cigarettes, pouring drinks, and the exchange of allegedly significant looks than any author I know and with less result. He expresses the sensibility of cheap women's-magazine fiction in prose as turgid as the most high-falutin' avant-garde writing, an unhappy combination. His ear for dialogue is of purest tin—"Oh what comic ingredients our sadnesses are made of!" one character remarks—and he has no ear at all for plain English, the phrasing being so chronically "off" as to give the effect of a bad translation, as: "Berkeley had grown deeply fond of Dick without getting through his reticence, which often summoned youthful banter to the defense of a nature almost solemn." Or: "Although he had no other job as yet, he refused to accept a

3 That Mr. Wertenbaker puts "Communist" in quotes shows simple ignorance of the left-wing milieu, I think, rather than bias. He just doesn't know his way around there, as when he makes the girl in bed already cited, allegedly a party-liner, refer to "the colonial people" instead of the standard Marxist usage, "the colonial peoples."

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technical discharge, which would have entitled him to five thousand dollars in severance pay. Such was his integrity." No skilled writer would juxtapose these sentences, or indeed write the second at all.

Political mythology rarely produces good novels, as Soviet literature since 1930 has amply demonstrated, and this, in addition to the author's tin ear, is doubtless responsible for the artistic defects of *The Death of Kings.* We took ourselves pretty seriously, I suppose, when I worked for Luce on *Fortune,* but not in the elegant, portentous way of Mr. Wertenbaker's characters. Like them, we talked a lot, but how differently! Mostly gossip, shop talk, or arguments in rough-and-ready language about limited, concrete matters. Not these lofty Socratic dialogues—without a Socrates—about what are principles, really, or whither the Chinese revolution? I do recall such dialogues, but earlier in my life—to be exact, at college, and we called them "bull sessions." There was indeed much conflict on *Fortune* between liberalistic writers and conservative editors—I left in 1936 partly because I lost a crucial battle over the final installment of a series I wrote on the U.S. Steel Corp.—but again it took a more modest form, that of grubby little arguments about data rather than of grandiose expositions of cosmic philosophy. I was also involved, as a Trotskyist, in the left-wing movement of the '30s, and probably at some time asked someone, "Why did you fight in Spain?" But damned if I can recall any such scene as that on pp. 230-1 when Berkeley asks Dick Elgin this question. After a page of portentous meandering, we get, " 'I had to do something, and going to Spain was the easiest thing.' . . . Berkeley refrained from asking what the alternatives had been; trust had not gone that far." Finally Dick, after "looking up at the sky above the chasm of Fifth Avenue, as though searching there for the words to give meaning to an adventure an older man might think meaningless," reveals he was sore about Franco. " 'So I had to do something, and of the two things that might have helped'—he paused while their heels rang in unison on the sidewalk—'the other thing I couldn't do.' " Berkeley, of course, delicately refrains from asking what "the other thing" was, and it is not until two hundred pages later that we find it meant spying in the State Department for Soviet Russia. (The author does not conceal his admiration for such lofty integrity.) I'm afraid the people I knew on the left, whether Trotskyists or fellow-travelers, would not have discussed the issue of Spain in this vague and gentlemanly way, but of course we were real people and not characters in a liberal soap opera.

Dwight Macdonald

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VARIETY

THE ANTI-AMERICAN WITCH HUNT IN THE YEAR 1953

Observing the recent flourishing of the anti-American myth in Germany we discern three stages: 1951, 1952, 1953.

1951 saw the publication of Ernst von Salomon's *Fragebogen,* which proved to be the most popular book since *Mein Kampf* and *The Myth of the Twentieth Century.* Only in the last hundred of its eight hundred pages does it deal with Americans, the tenor being: "America is no better either." The Germans, tired of being urged to repent of their conduct between 1933 and 1945, heaved a sigh of relief at this presentation of an equally culpable America. Salomon provided the return ticket with which one could comfortably go back to old times as if nothing had happened.

During the following year there appeared another book, a not uninteresting report interlarded with sentimentality and a rather pathetic, zealously denunciatory ideology. Jungk, American correspondent for some German papers, called his book *The Future Has Already Begun.* Although it did not have the effect of Salomon's autobiography, it represents an interesting ideological link between the years '51 and '53. This work was first published in Germany as a series of articles, under the much more characteristic title *America Without a Mask.* Anti-American ideologists of this sort don't want to criticize, they want to unmask. Pretending to expunge the America-myth they create a new one: the myth of America as the antagonist of God.

Salomon's ideology was still pretty harmless. For him it was sufficient to absolve the German people of guilt. Jungk introduced the theme: "America versus God," which was to be more vigorously, more effectively orchestrated by Matthias. But even Jungk's mythologizing inflated the American people into a diabolic monstrosity. Here we find such statements:

> For even today, Americans are concerned with much more than the possession of land. They are basically more ambitious than even their sharpest opponents would dare to believe. That is to say, they aim not at dominion over continents, or even the entire globe; they strive for something infinitely higher. America endeavors to gain power over the "All," complete and absolute mastery over the universe of nature in all of its manifestations.
>
> This particular power-drive is not directed against any existing nations, classes, races, elites, or castes. Its attack is not upon governments but upon those very forms of creation which have been unshaken since the beginning, the clouds, the wind, plants and animals; it seeks to conquer and subject the infinite heavens themselves. What is at stake is not the seat of this dictator or that president, but the very throne of God. America aspires to repeat His deeds, to create anew that cosmos which He has already supremely or-

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ganized according to the laws of reason and predictability, and to this end all of its powers are directed. This is a conspiracy.

Even the "conspiracy" is present in order to complete the parallel with Nazi ideology. Of course we are no longer dealing with the conspiracy of the Elders of Zion; but here again it is not criticism we find but the uncovering of a "conspiracy."

In other words, all the negative characteristics of Western civilization known for centuries are attributed specifically to the American people. Thus it is with the help of both Huxley's and Orwell's vision that America is being described. Logically, it follows that all who do not want God's throne to be empty are goaded on against the evil-doer America. Since such metaphysical phantoms incite persecutions and kindle hatred, they are a mortal danger. They may truly be called the witch-hunting demonologies of modern times.

It is not a question of defending America but of asking, rather, whether it is permissible to apply those methods which had their greatest triumph in Hitler's time, i.e., to turn a people into a metaphysical scapegoat supposedly threatening the existence of the world. It is not permissible! Whether one is dealing with Jews or Americans, with Germans, Russians, or the inhabitants of San Marino, such methods should be ruled out.

And now we come to the man for whom Salomon and Jungk only prepared the way. Salomon heralded his coming even before he was published, and Jungk defended Matthias against his critics (although he assumes at the same time a critical attitude and does not stand fully by the propaganda which he has created).

II

The U.S. is the home of all servitude, just as Pandora's box is the home of all evil. —L. L. MATTHIAS

In the title of his book *The Discovery of America Anno 1953,* L. L. Matthias compares himself to Columbus. What do they have in common? Columbus wrongly believed himself to have discovered India. Matthias wrongly believes he has discovered America. Columbus as a result of his error found America. Matthias in his slanderous work found what in the German text he heatedly calls "frustration." It remains to be asked: whose "frustration"?

The subtitle of this book on America—a product of the sickest aspect of contemporary Europe—is *The Ordered Chaos.* What is the old continent in contrast to this? The ordered paradise? The unordered paradise?

According to our author, life is dismal in America. Characteristic of the country is the amount of "racketeering." About half of all families are without means. The workers have no homes; and those they do own are in a miserable

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state. Also, it is not possible to supply the people with sufficient quantities of water and electricity. Labor solidarity does not exist. "In contrast to Europe, a labor leader cannot, in the manner of the military, rely on the support of his troops." (Question: On what socialistic troops did the German labor leaders lean during the Adenauer election?)

The railroad system is run down. Nutrition is bad; mice were fed with the bread which Americans have to eat and this diet was very harmful to them. This miserable bread is probably the reason why so much ice cream is consumed in the U.S. Nowhere in the world is the state of health as bad as in the New World; and one-tenth of the nation is insane.

Culture, too, is in a bad way. "An order of rights in the European sense" does not exist. Teachers often prefer to be "dishwashers" and are treated "like robots" by the Board of Education. The professors are stupid and it is therefore necessary to import them from other countries "in the manner formerly done with soldiers." "How deep the academic profession has sunk" can be seen from the fact that the average income among teachers is only $4,860. The American university "has always been autocratic." The American people do not read. The ultimate authority quoted is Gallup. The

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FORMERLY THE NINETEENTH CENTURY & AFTER
1877 1954
U.S. and Canadian annual subscription fee $5.00
Obtainable from all principal agents
or from the publishers 26 Bloomsbury Way, London, W.C.1.

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European book-guilds are for the benefit of the reader, the American book-clubs for the benefit of the publisher. It makes one shudder to think of it.

In his last book, Toynbee called the society of Western civilization "post-Christian." The Jewish Catholic Matthias reserves the unchristian label for America, his *bête noire*. "One can no longer call the American nation a Christian one," says he. Even American Catholics are no longer to be counted as such according to Matthias, who was himself a Catholic teacher at an American Catholic school. America's eternal hatred of Europe, of which Jefferson is representative, is nothing but hatred of Christianity. Rosenberg's *Myth of the Twentieth Century* (first half) has found a worthy successor here in the second half.

Men and women do not exist on this dreadful continent. Hence both sexes are unhappy. Furthermore, an officers' corps and troops in the European sense have never existed here. "The officer has no respect for the soldier and the soldier none for the officer." Where politics and history are concerned, it is said that the most rapacious businessmen have ruled here since 1787. All wars have been business wars; each peace a business peace. It was for reasons of business that America entered the two World Wars. By the way, it was not Russia but the U.S.A. which destroyed the sovereignty of Czechoslovakia, for with the Marshall Plan America provoked the Russian coup. . . .

In spite of all this, and although East Germany will surely make much of the Matthias quotes, one should not call this anti-American a Bolshevist without qualifications. He is made of rarer stuff. He is a Catholic commissar unmarxistically in love with hierarchy. "Order of rank" is his concern. Jefferson (his whipping-boy) was the personification of "ranklessness." Of such impudent generalizations is this book made up.

The metaphysical sauce which is supposed to bind this ragout of "facts" contains only that most fashionable of ingredients: sociology. Europe (in the center) is said to consist of two elements: the business or class society and the society of rank. Russia (on top) is said to consist of only one element: the classless society of rank. And America (on the bottom) is supposed to consist of only one

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element: the class society without rank. America is governed like a business concern, while Russia, in this book, reveals itself as the successor of the Catholic hierarchy. Thus, by definition, "decency, fairness, and cleanliness" cannot exist in America. How primitive the world is for this coldly malicious Catholic myth-manufacturer! It consists only of hell, earth, and heaven. As is often the case, concealed under the sociological fustian is an imagination which sees the devil everywhere.

The ideological stamp on this work is the idea that America is a business society in which the businessman dictates and the dollar rules; values, rank and honor are unheard of, hence the material and spiritual barrenness of the country, which is truly the outcast of the universe. In earlier times it was often said that the evils of American materialism had been infecting Europe, the innocent Parsifal. In the age of bloodthirsty myths Matthias has created a new monster: the American in person.

Compared with earlier unfriendly reports on America, this new attack is distinguished by a theological witch-hunting attitude which gives rise to pogroms; it is an after-birth of the Hitler period. In the manner that the Jew was represented, Matthias now represents the American: as a conglomeration of all evil. His anti-Americanism is the genuine successor of that anti-Semitism. A whole nation is made to look like the very incarnation of the "Evil One." The Hamburg paper *Die Zeit* entitled its review "When Evil Intent Guides the Writer's Pen." The *Neue Zuricher Zeitung* gave the wretched work the title: "America Through a Distorting Mirror." Perhaps the best title for such a review would be *Sein Kampf*.

The trick of this book is that it quotes only American sources. It is an anthology of American anti-American remarks. There is no better way to mislead than with guaranteed genuine quotations. With malicious zeal Matthias combed hundreds of American publications for anti-American passages. These

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he pastes together and illuminates with the thesis of the "business society"; Hitler did the same with those horrible, materialistic Jews.

For more than a hundred years the philosophers and sociologists of Western civilization, of Germany, France, England and Italy, have complained that the old values have disintegrated, that new ones have failed to arise, and that material interests have more and more become the measure of all things. Matthias, like all shady instigators, seizes upon a scapegoat: the American. He sends him into the wilderness burdened with all the sins of his age; and this he did in Germany, during the American occupation. Not a bad moment for such a book!

Whence this anti-American passion? Matthias writes in his conclusion of "interests which are not mine." Which interests *are* his? He spent ten years in the U.S. and the one word he most thoroughly learned here was "frustration." For years he tried to found a European academy for Americans but his plan was frustrated. The Americans had no use for it. Did they sense, perhaps, that they were not dealing with a peacemaker but an instigator? The documents of these negotiations should be published.

This book compromises all genuine criticism of America, whose great classic spokesman was de Tocqueville. It shows (entirely contrary to the author's intent) how self-critical the Americans actually are. May they not be robbed of the will to uncover their shortcomings by this enraged propagandist of the devil!

Ludwig Marcuse

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